editor's choice

Vagabond

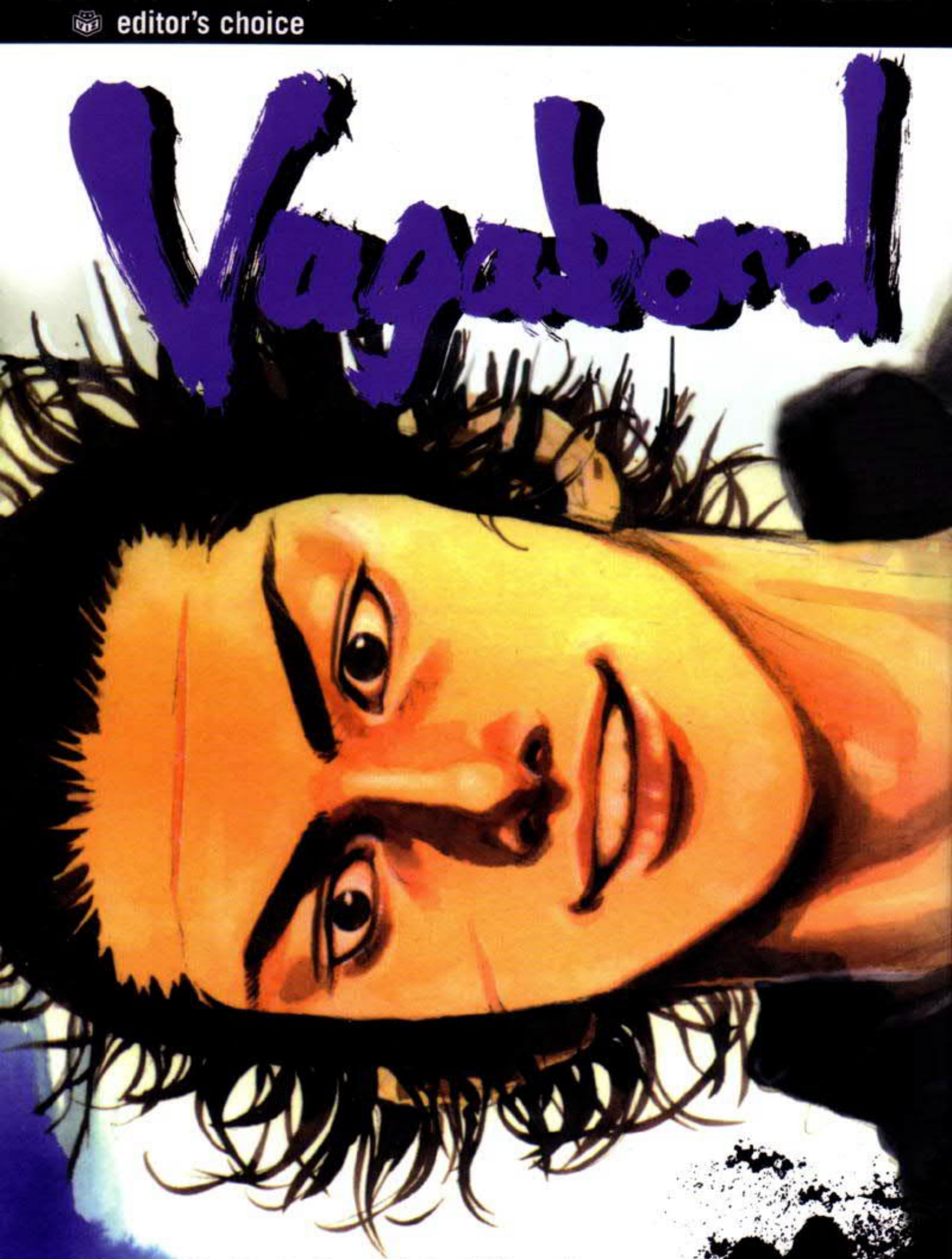
Story & Art by Takehiko Inoue

Based on the novel "Musashi" by Eiji Yoshikawa

vol. 8

editor's choice

Vagabond



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English Edition

Vagabond Vol. 8

Story & Art by
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Based on the novel "Musashi" by Eiji Yoshikawa

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HYUU
TAKE A DEEP BREATH.
I HAVE BECOME TOO ACCUSTOMED TO MY WOODEN PRACTICE SPEAR.
HUF
HUF
HUF
AM I TOO OVERWHELMED BY THIS DEADLY WEAPON...
...THE HŌZŌIN CROSS-SHAPED SPEAR?
OR PERHAPS...

HUF
HUF
HUF
DEEP BREATHS ...
HYUU
...I FEEL OVERWHELMED BY THIS MAN'S GREAT PRESENCE?

#69 Life II

Vagabond vol. 8

Story & Art by Takehiko Inoue

Based on the novel "Musashi" by Eiji Yoshikawa

FWISH

FWOOSH
...

GASP!
!!!

THWAK

WH...

I MISSED MY CHANCE!
DAMN!

HIS WOODEN SWORD IS TOO LONG.
LUCKY FOR HIM.
IT THREW MUSASHI OFF.
INSHUN, YOU'RE LEAVING YOURSELF OPEN!
...INSHUN WOULD BE DEAD.
HAD IT BEEN AN ACTUAL SWORD...
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
KRICH

INSHUN HAS NEVER LOST HIS CALM DURING A FIGHT. BUT NOW HE'S...
WHAT IS HAPPENING!?
...DURING THAT LONG FACE OFF?
KRICH
SHUF
SHUF
COULD MUSASHI REALLY HAVE GAINED THE UPPER HAND...
HUF
KLNCH
HUF
HUF
HUF
KLNCH

HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
INSHUN...
HUF
HUF
THIS IS WHERE IT BEGINS...

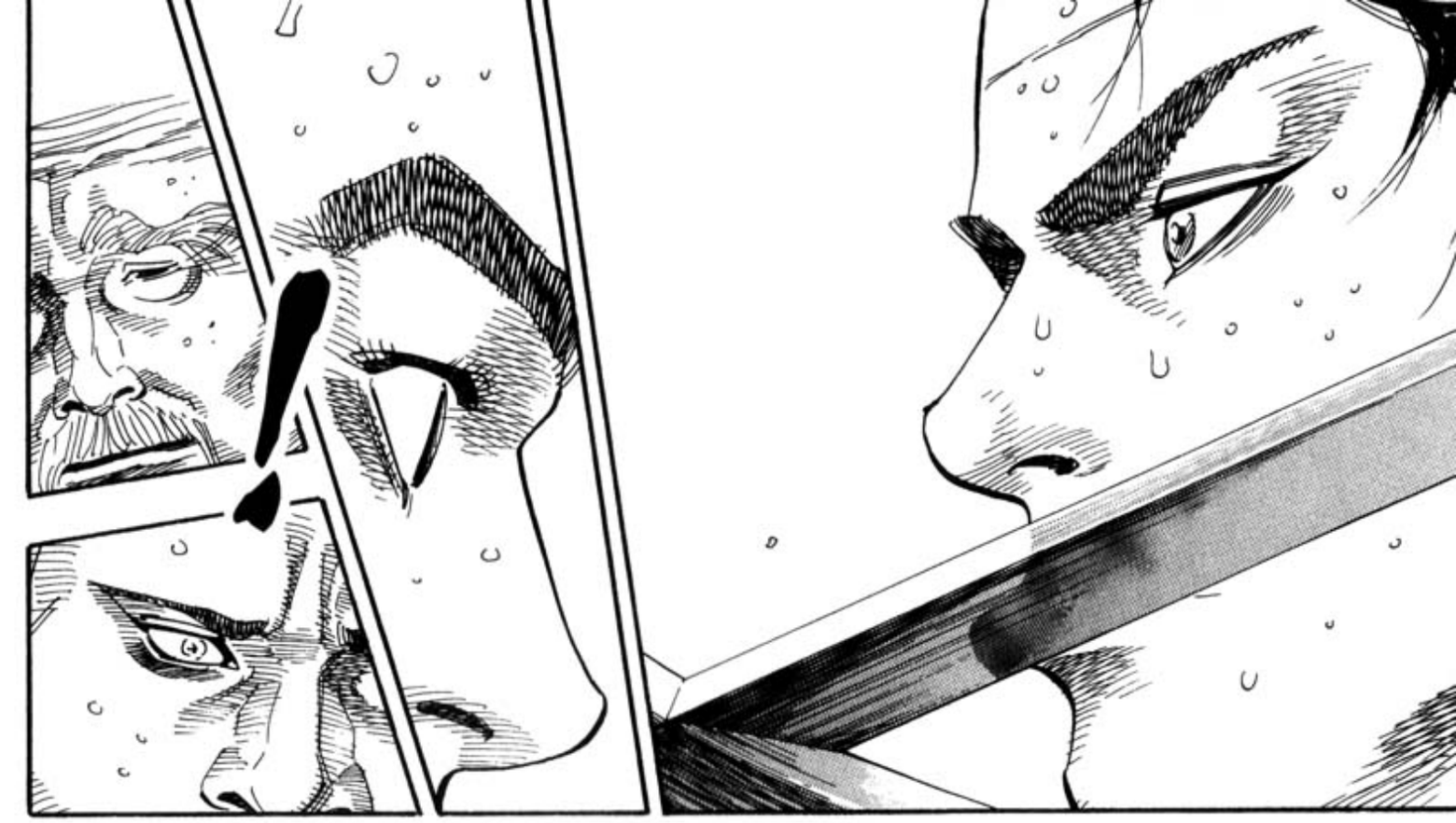
...WHAT YOU'VE BEEN AFTER-- MORTAL COMBAT...

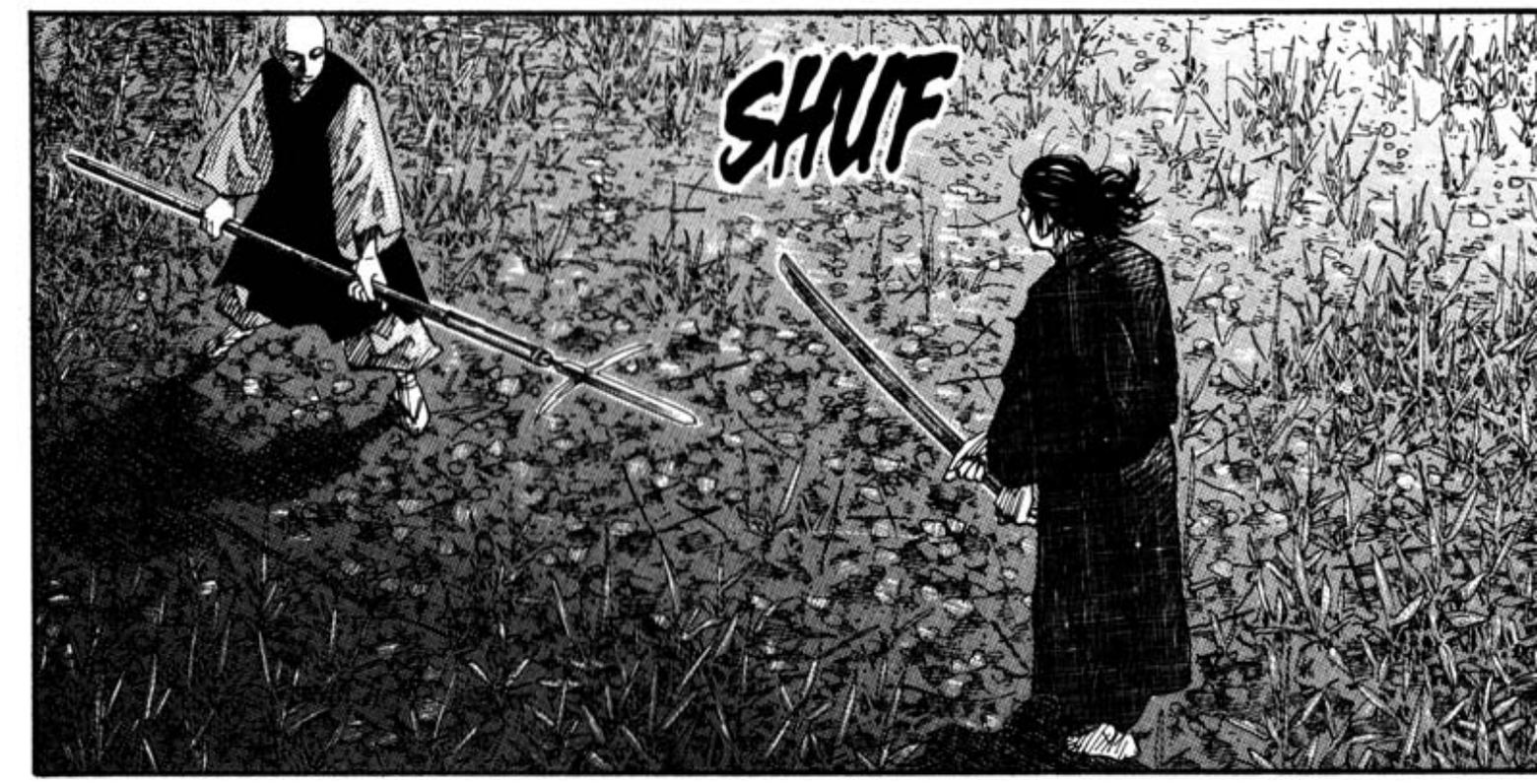
!!!!!

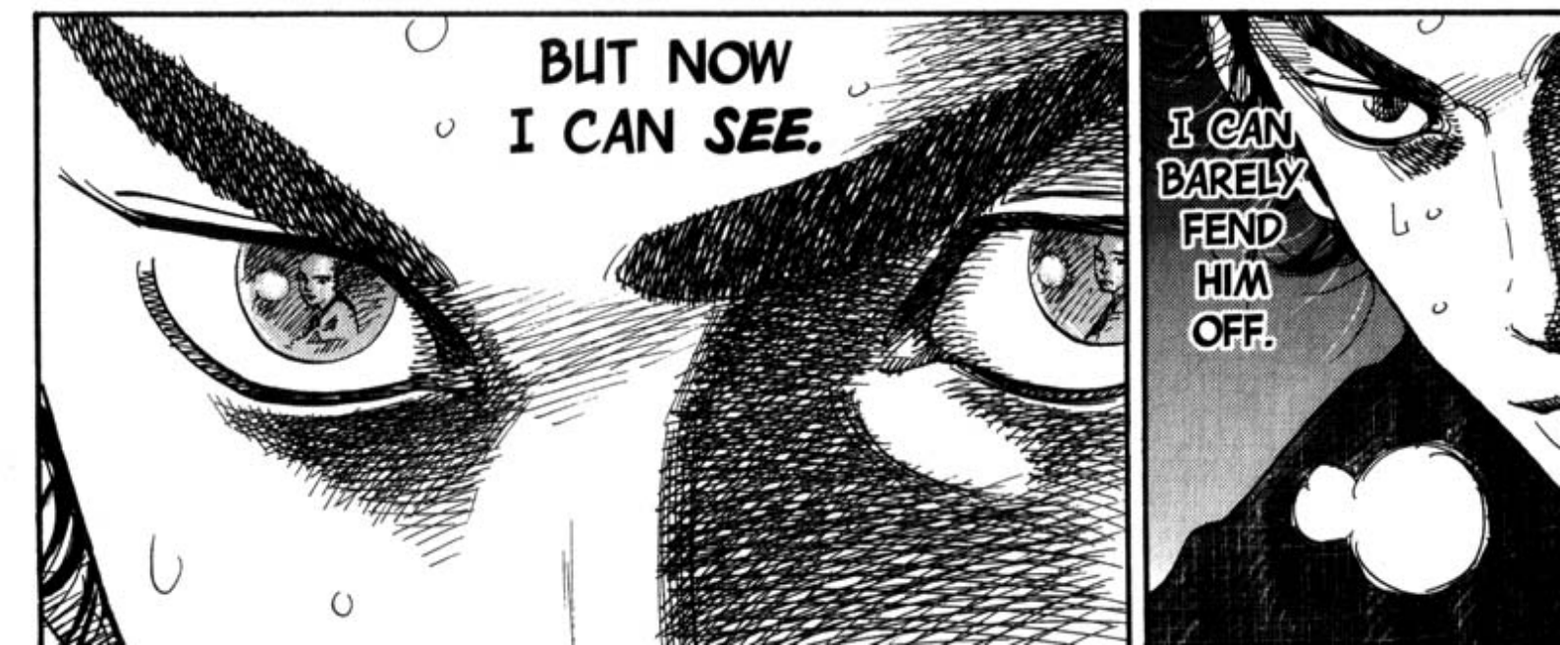
FWOOSH
GRP
BMP
!!
KRICH
!!

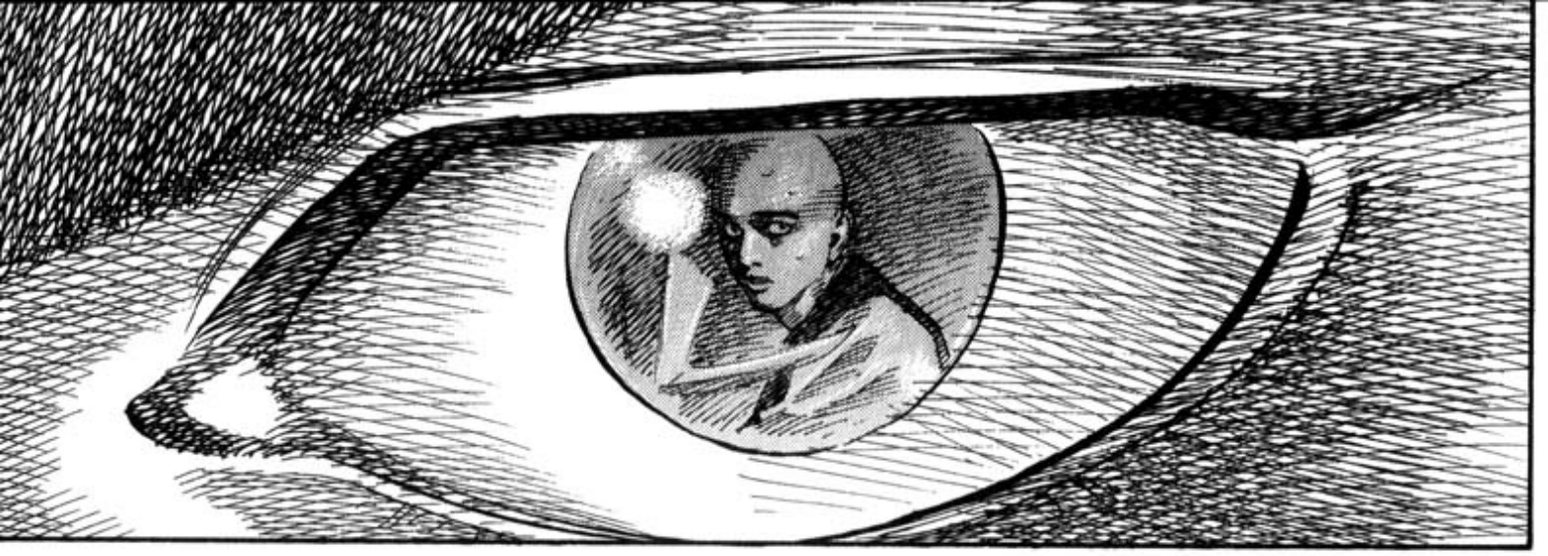
WOOSH
GRP

YAH!!
FWOH

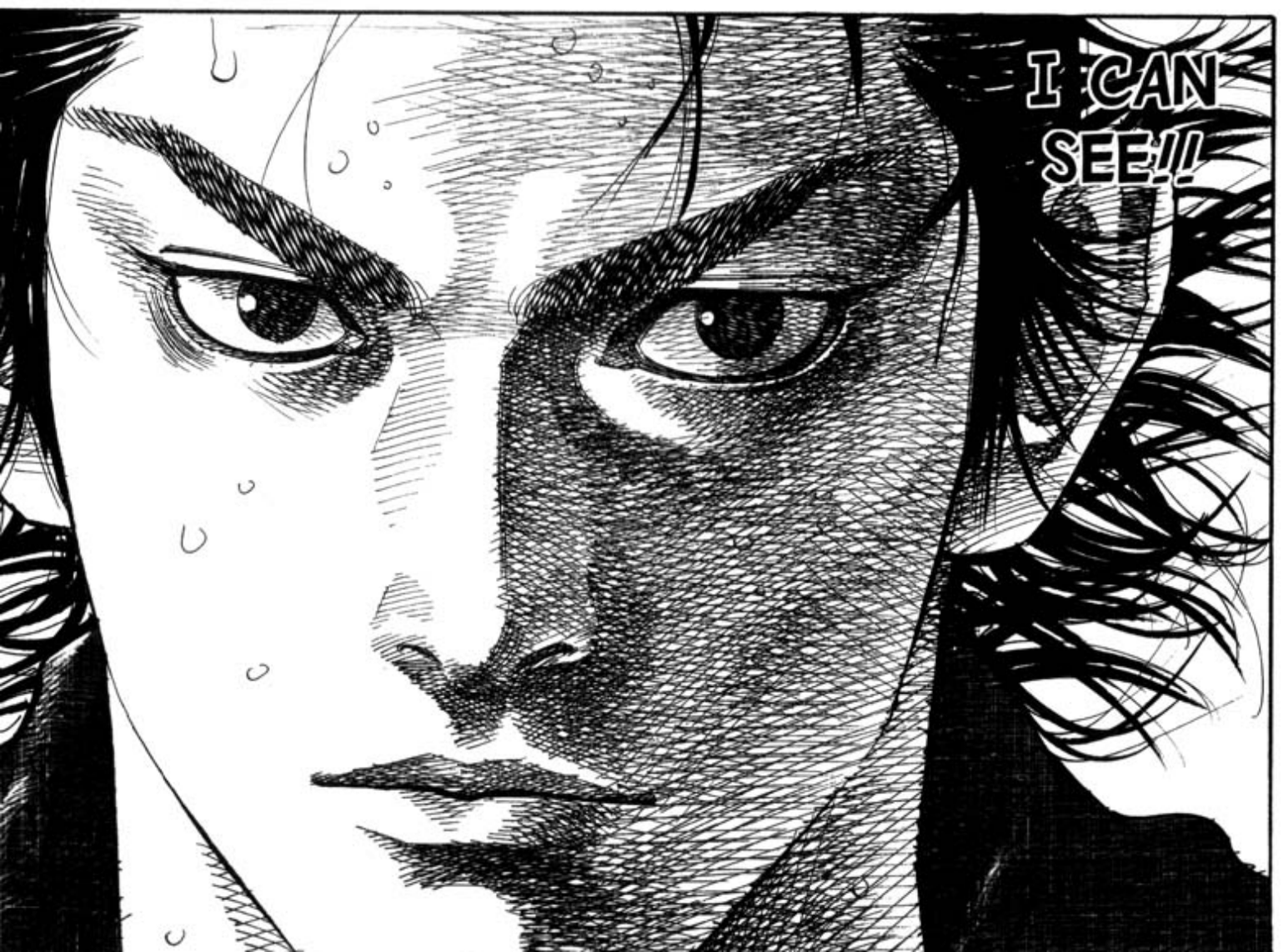



SHUF


BUT NOW
I CAN SEE.
I CAN BARELY FEND HIM OFF.



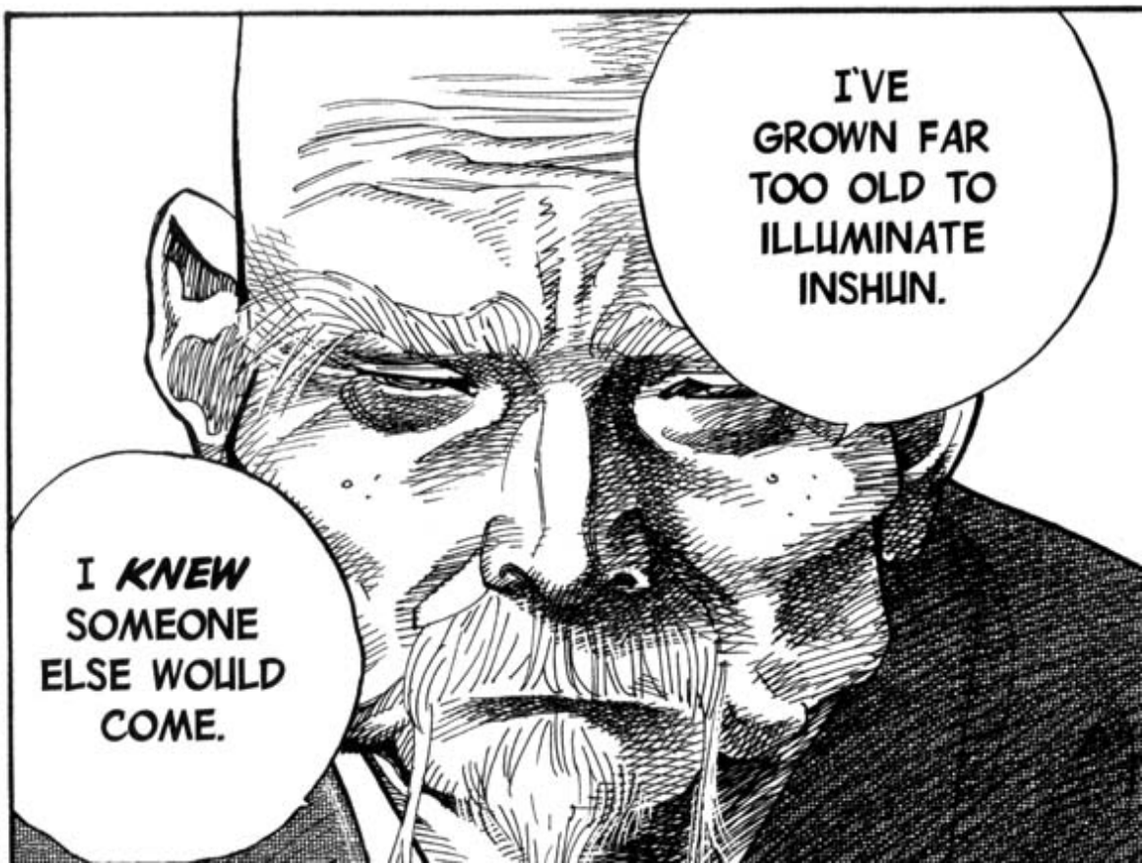
HUF
HUF
HUF


I CAN SEE!!!

WHAT DID YOU TEACH MUSASHI!?

SIR!!

HE'S FINALLY HERE.

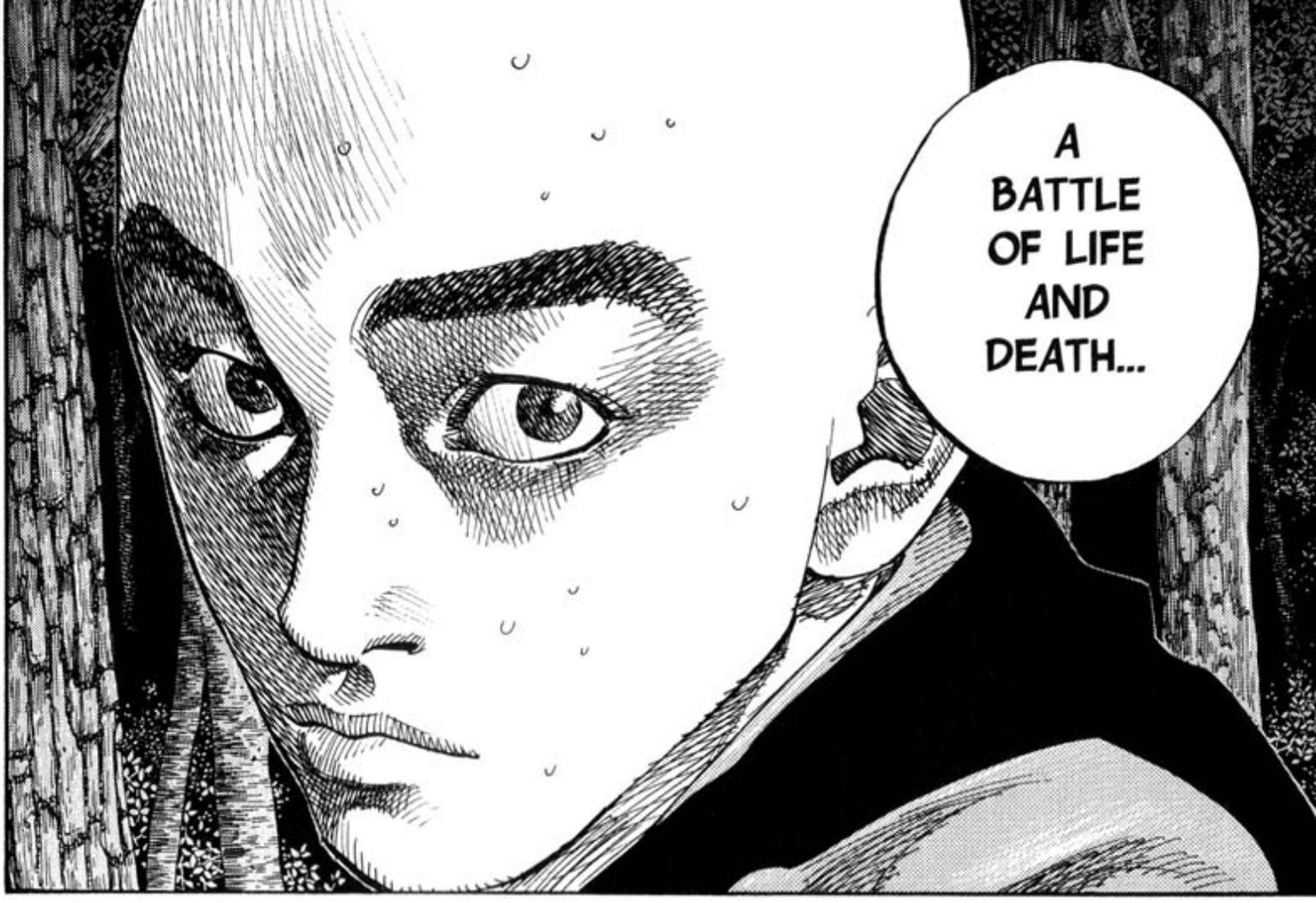

I'VE GROWN FAR TOO OLD TO ILLUMINATE INSHUN.
I *KNEW* SOMEONE ELSE WOULD COME.

AND THEN MUSASHI APPEARED BEFORE US.

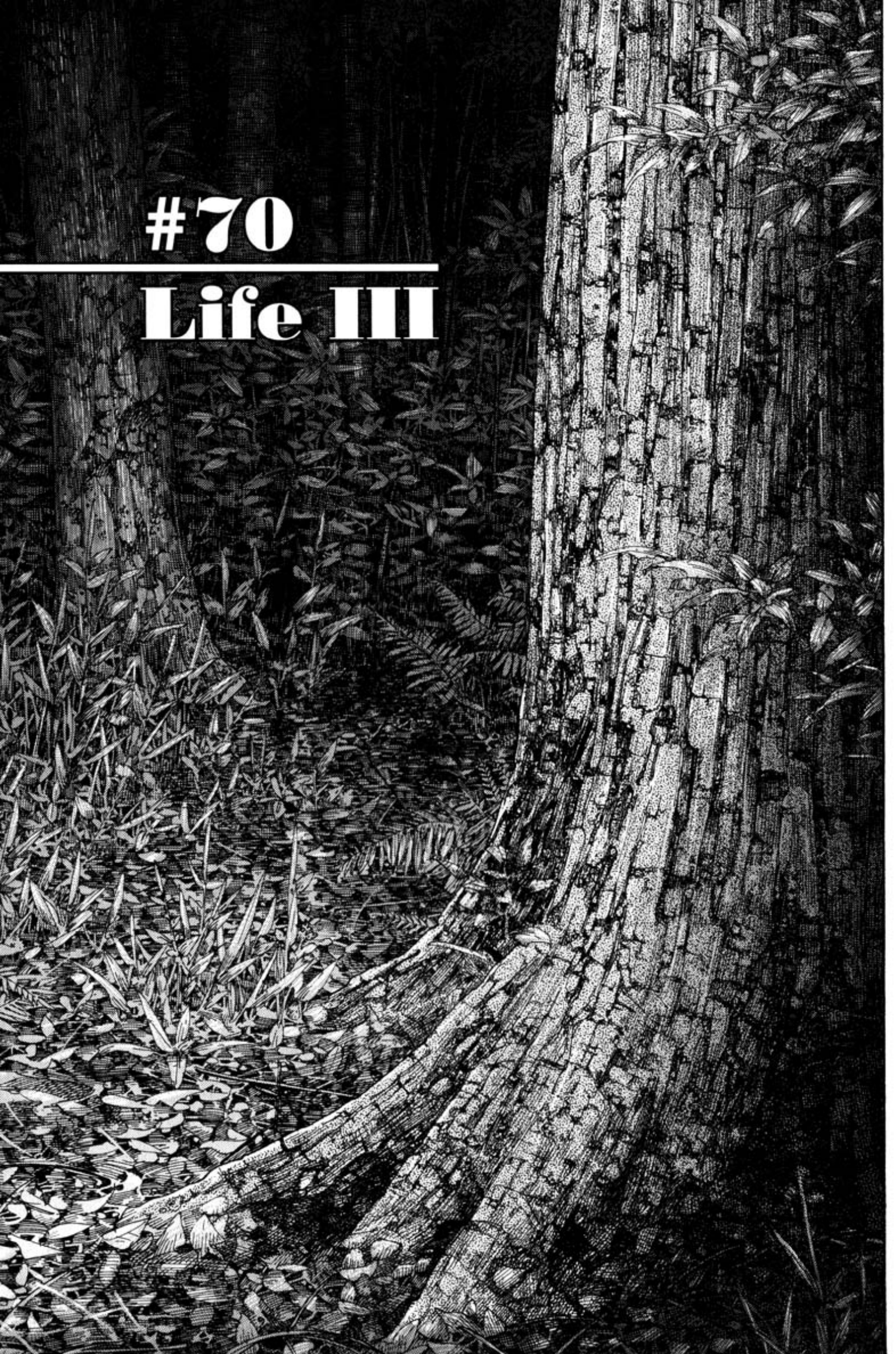
SNAP

COME...

COME...
I CAN SEE THROUGH YOU, INSHUN.


A BATTLE OF LIFE AND DEATH...

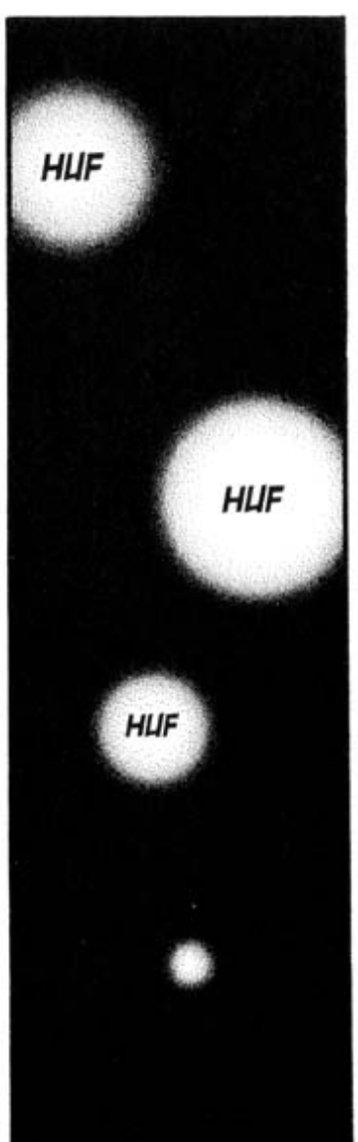
THIS TIME YOUR LIFE'S ON THE LINE.


#70
Life III

FSSHH
FSSHH
FSSHH
FSSHH
FSSHH

I
HAVE THE
VISION.

I CAN SEE.


HUF
HUF
HUF

THMP
THMP

WHAT'S WRONG?
DAMN.
I'M NOT MYSELF.
ZZT
!?
YOU'RE DIFFERENT FROM LAST TIME.
HUF
NOT SO TALKATIVE.
HUF
WAIT...
IT DOESN'T MATTER.
HUF
HUF
HUF

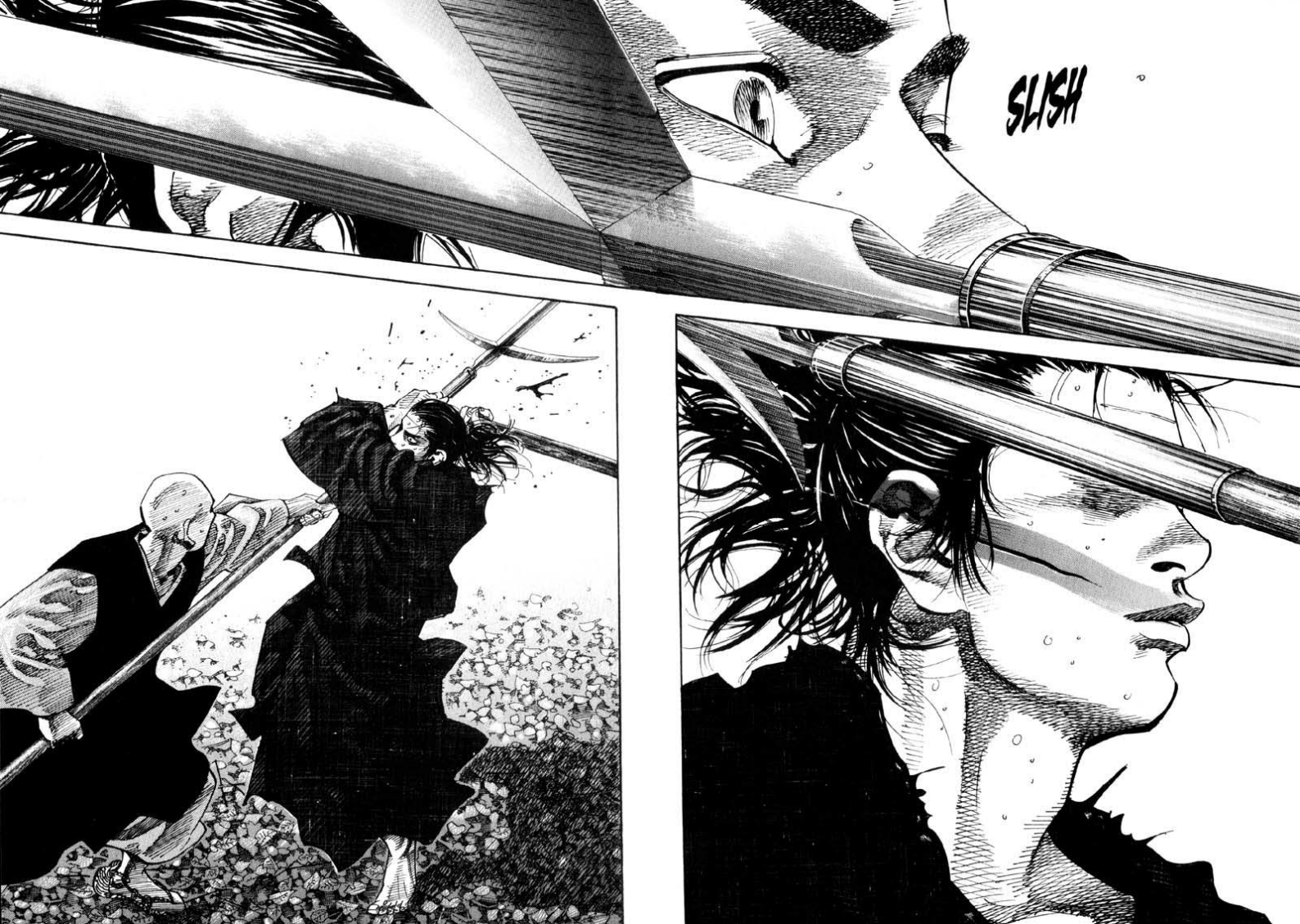
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
I'M PUTTING MY LIFE ON THE LINE. EVERYTHING'S DIFFERENT.
OF COURSE I'M NOT MY USUAL SELF.
HUF
HUF
ZZT
ZT
!?
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF

I CAN SEE THROUGH YOU!!
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
I'VE WANTED THIS FOR SO LONG.
ZAKK
WHAT'S THAT?
THIS IS IT...
MORTAL COMBAT-- I'VE BEEN SEEKING IT OUT.
HUF
HUF
HUF
I NEED THIS TO BECOME INVINCIBLE.

HUF
HUF
HUF
OLD MAN, I CAN SEE THROUGH INSHUN!
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
I DON'T KNOW WHAT THE MASTER TAUGHT HIM...
...BUT MUSASHI HAS BECOME INCREDIBLY STRONG.
HUF
HE IS THE OPPONENT I'VE BEEN SEEKING OUT.
HUF
HUF
HUF

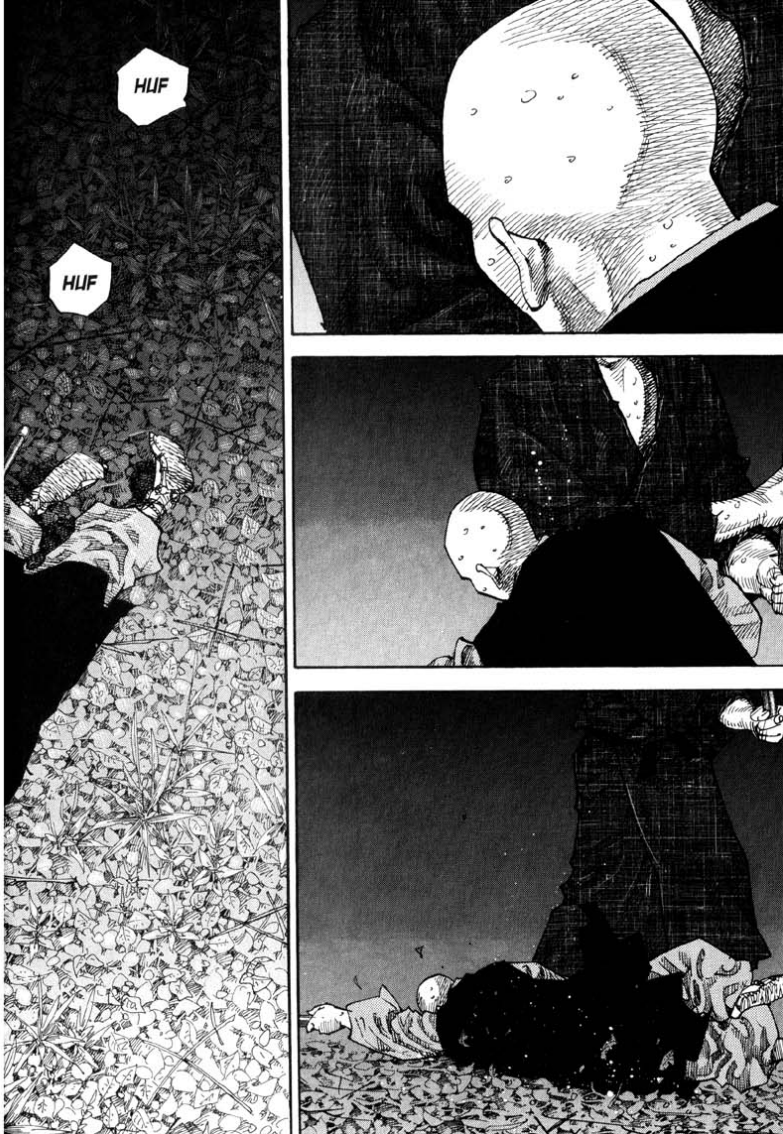
FWUMP
I CAN MOVE FREELY.

FWICK


SLISH

WHUD

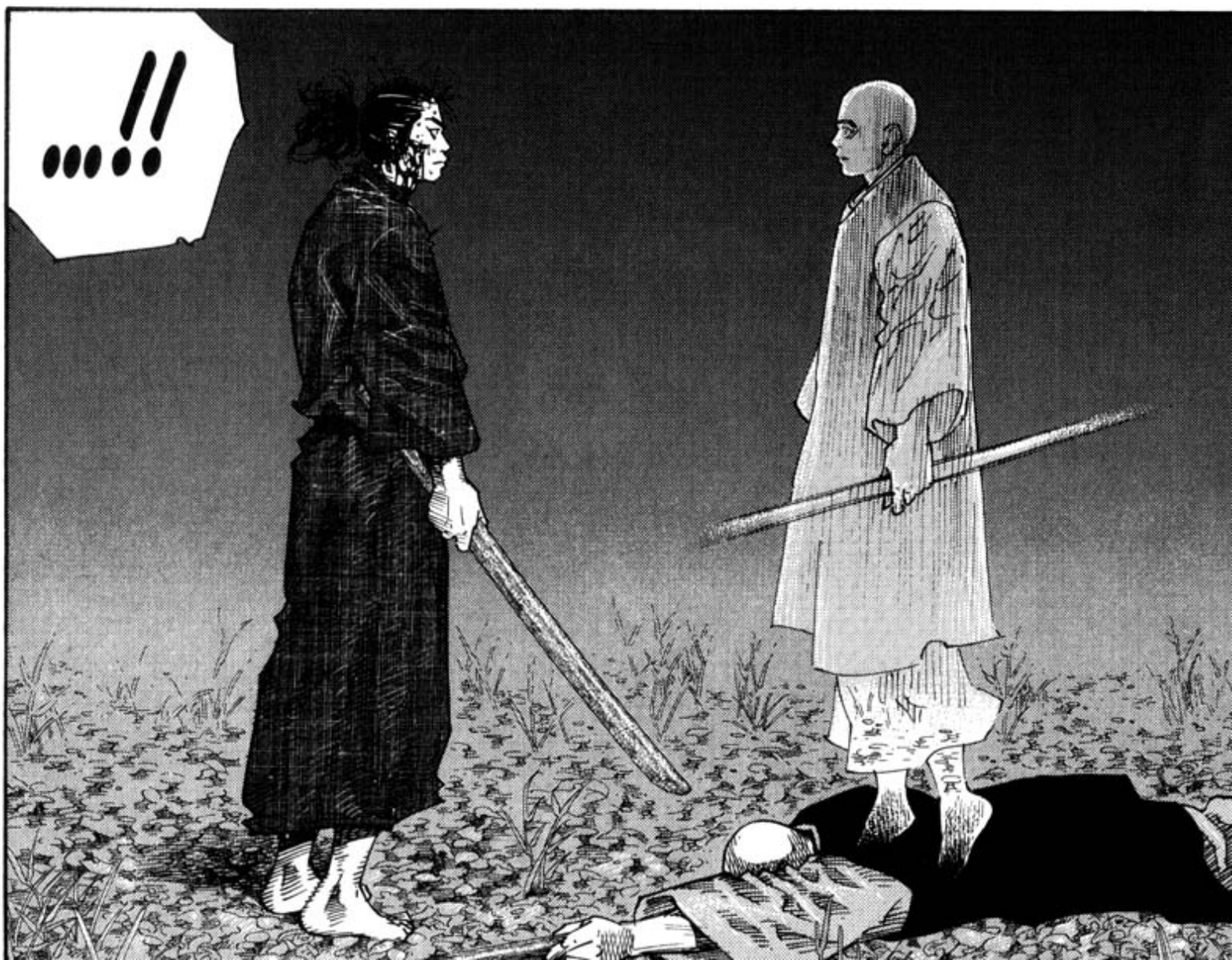
THWAK

HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF

HUF
HUF

I AM STRONG!!
THWAK
YAHH!!
THWAK
SHUF
SHUF

HUF
HUF
HUF
I AM STRONG!!

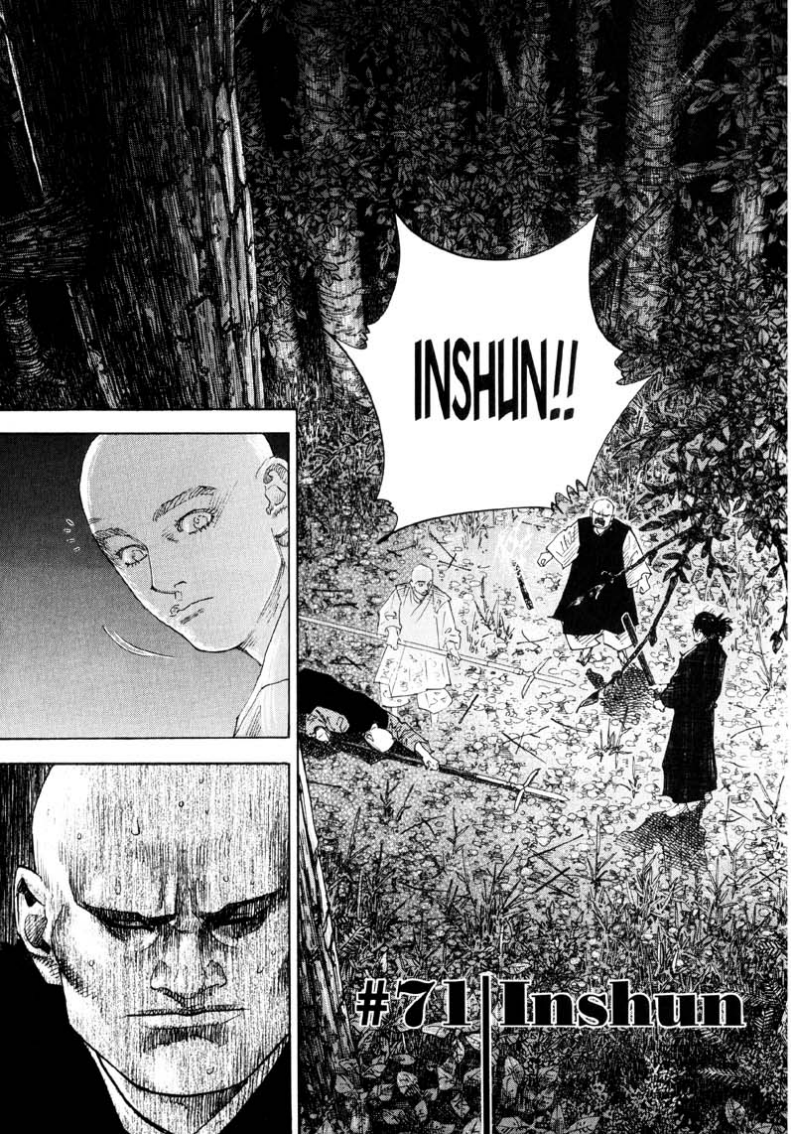
HAH!!
HAH!!
YAHH!!
YAHH!!



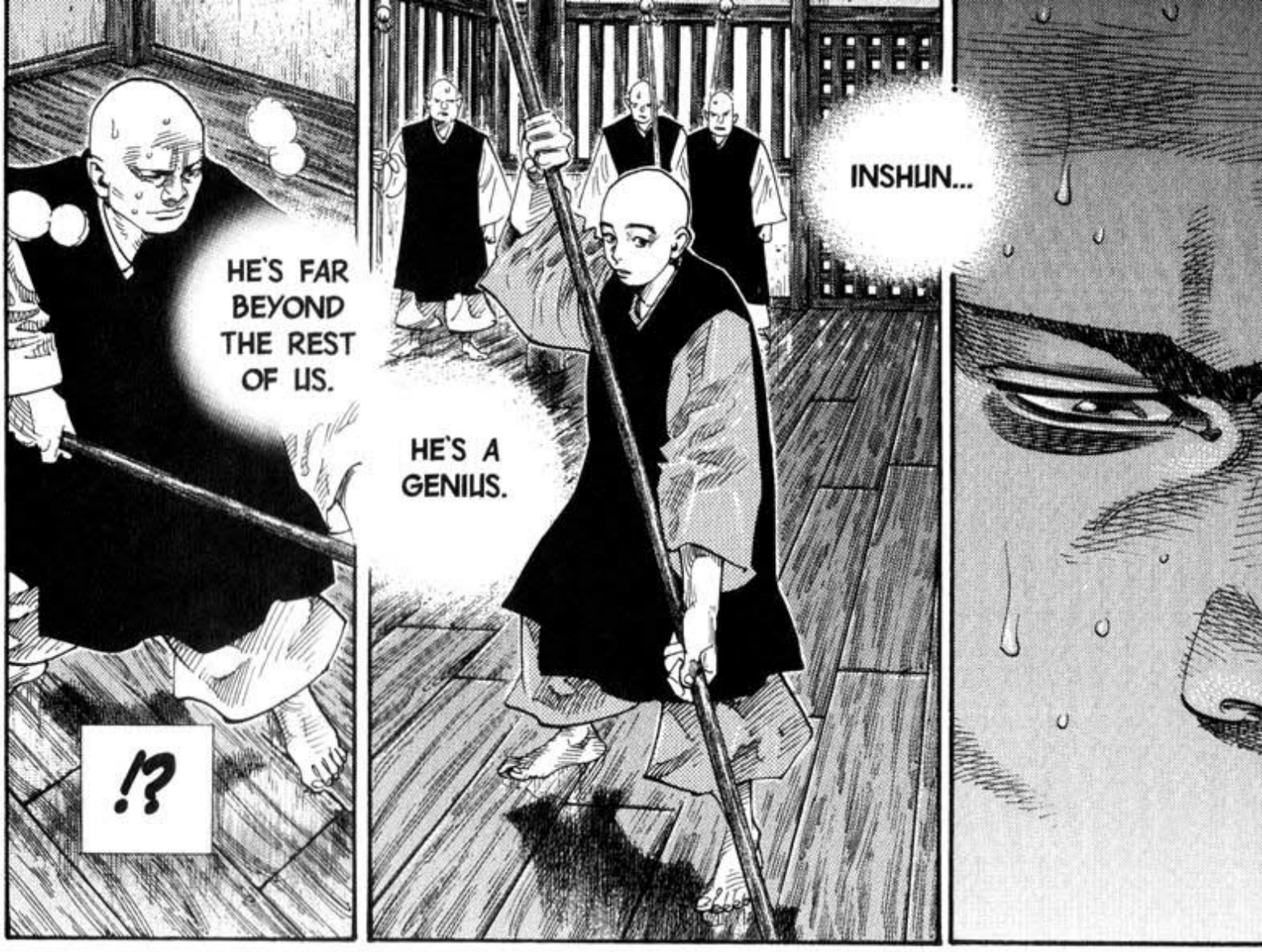
Vagabond

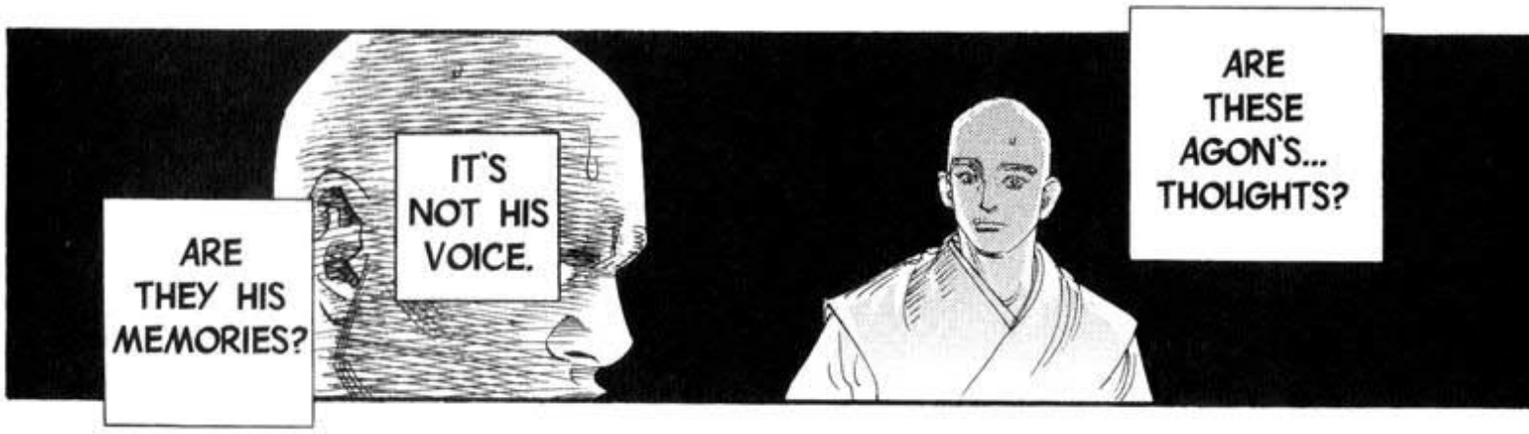
(GYO)

HUF!!
HUF!!
HUF!!
HUF!!
HUF!!
HUF!!



#71 | Inshun

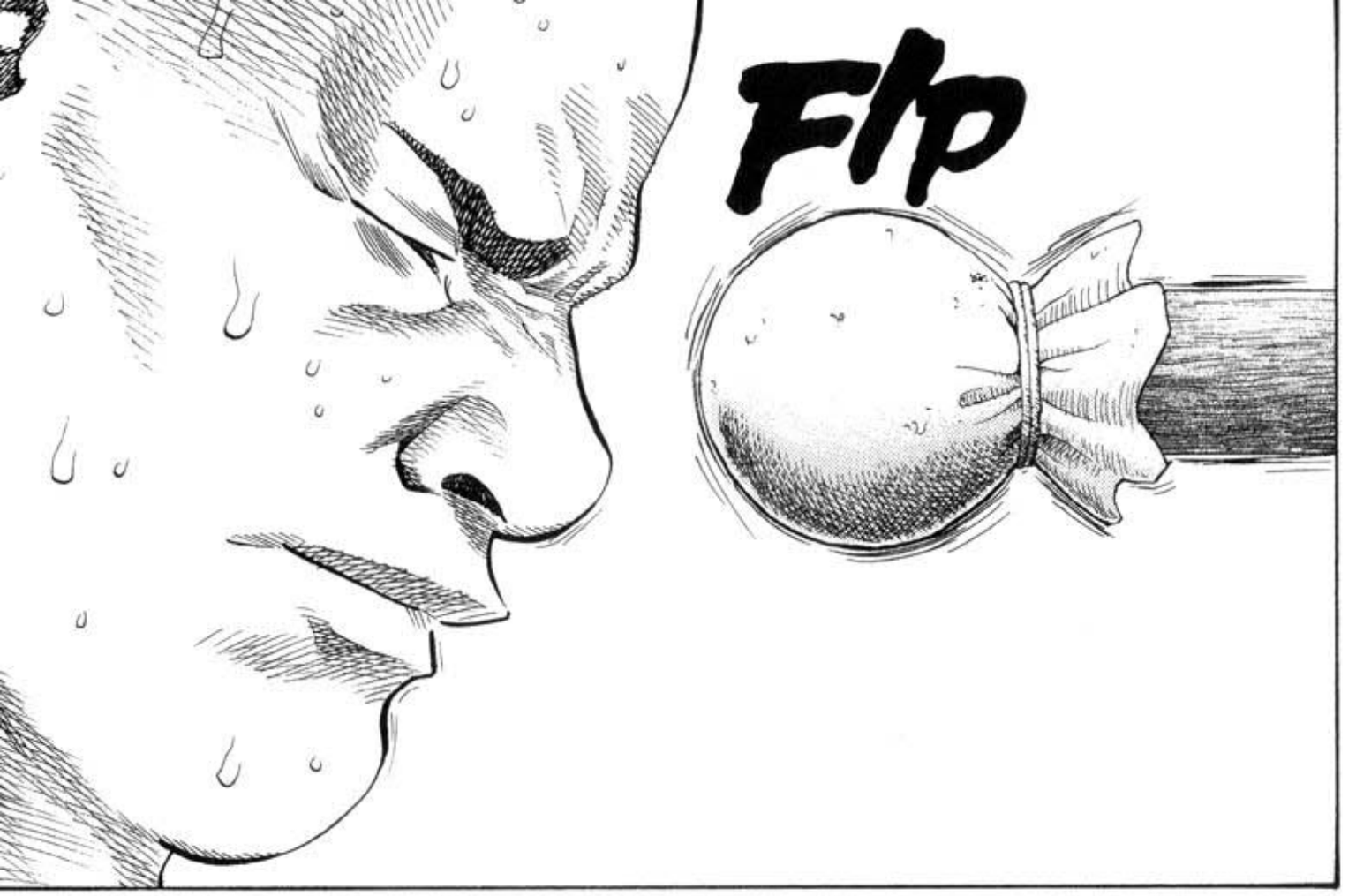

HE'S FAR BEYOND THE REST OF US.
HE'S A GENIUS.
INSHUN...
!?


ARE THESE AGON'S... THOUGHTS?
IT'S NOT HIS VOICE.
ARE THEY HIS MEMORIES?

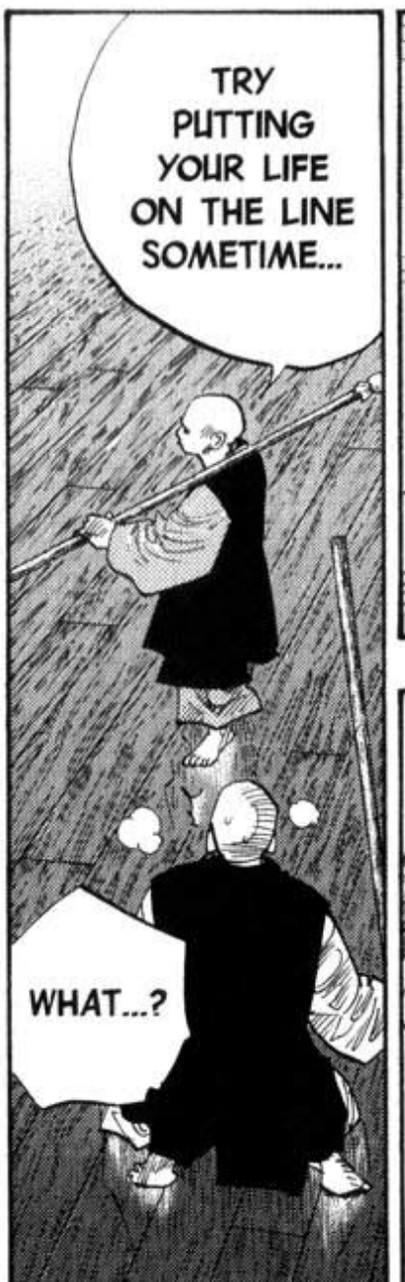
WE ADMIRED YOUR STRENGTH...
...WE ALL WANTED TO BEFRIEND YOU.
THESE VISIONS KEEP COMING...
ALL OF US...
.....

THAT WAS WHY YOU WERE SO POPULAR WITH EVERYONE...
...AT FIRST.
...?
WHAT IS HE SAYING ...?
THOK
NNGH...
URGH...
I CONCEDE...
ARGH!!

I CONCEDE DEFEAT!!
INSHUN ...?
FWUP
SHUF
!?
SHUF
FSH
I YIELD!!
INSHUN!!
WOOSH
AAHH!!!
DON'T KILL ME.

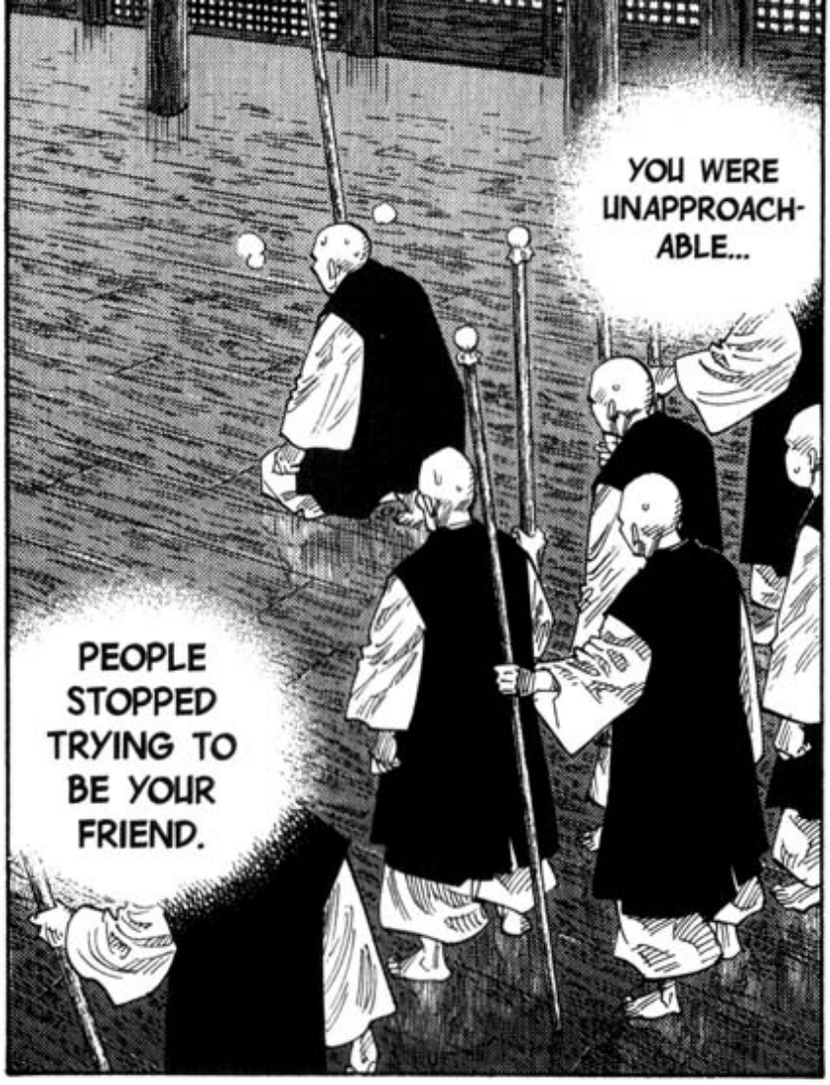

Flp

MORTAL COMBAT.


TRY PUTTING YOUR LIFE ON THE LINE SOMETIME...
WHAT...?

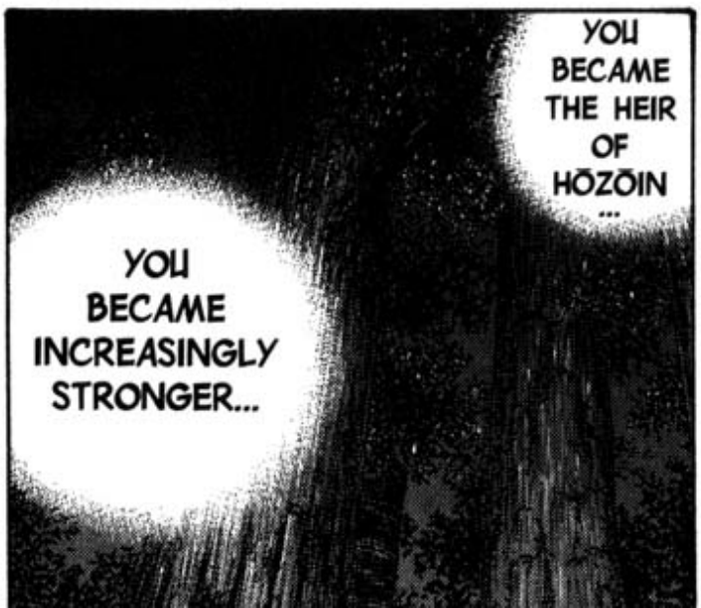
.....

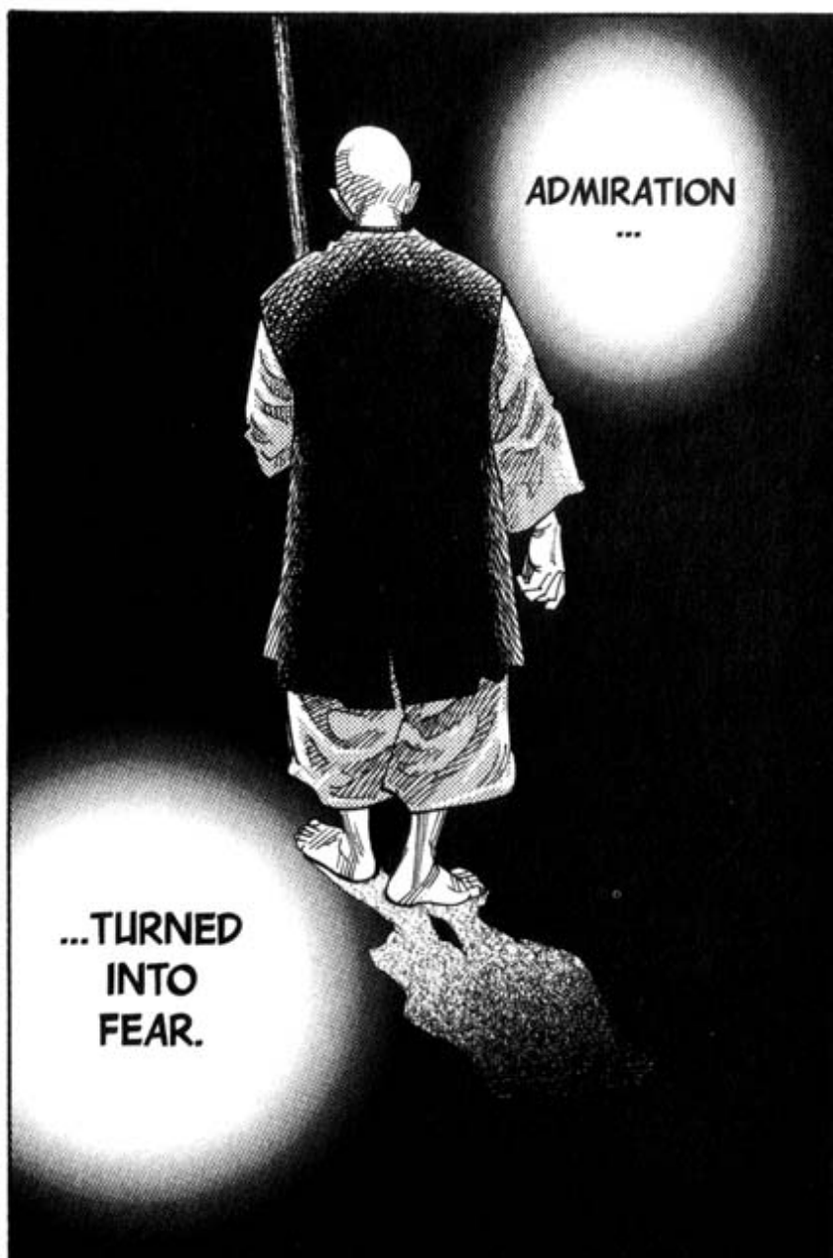
...!!
FWUMP
HUF
HUF
HUF


YOU WERE UNAPPROACH-ABLE...
PEOPLE STOPPED TRYING TO BE YOUR FRIEND.

WHAT WERE YOU THINKING?
YOU HAD THE DESIRE TO BECOME STRONGER BUT DID YOU HAVE ANY OTHER EMOTIONS?

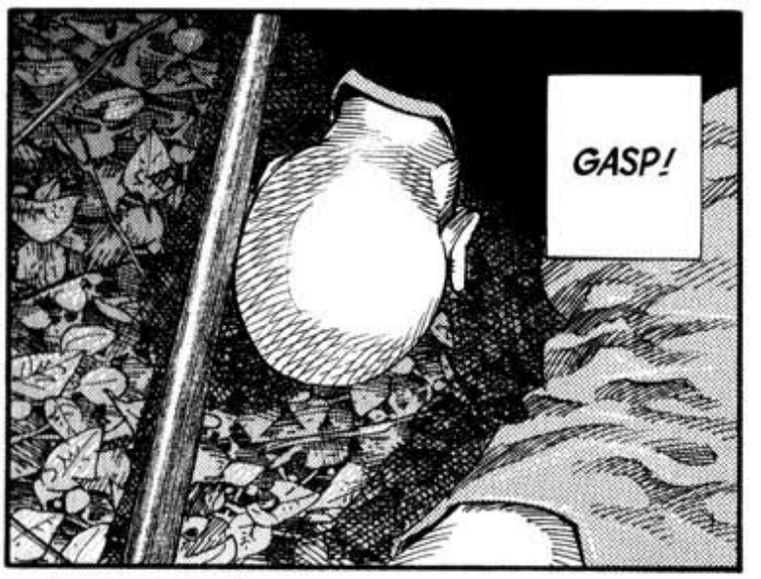
.....
I SEE...


YOU BECAME THE HEIR OF HŌZŌIN ...
YOU BECAME INCREASINGLY STRONGER...

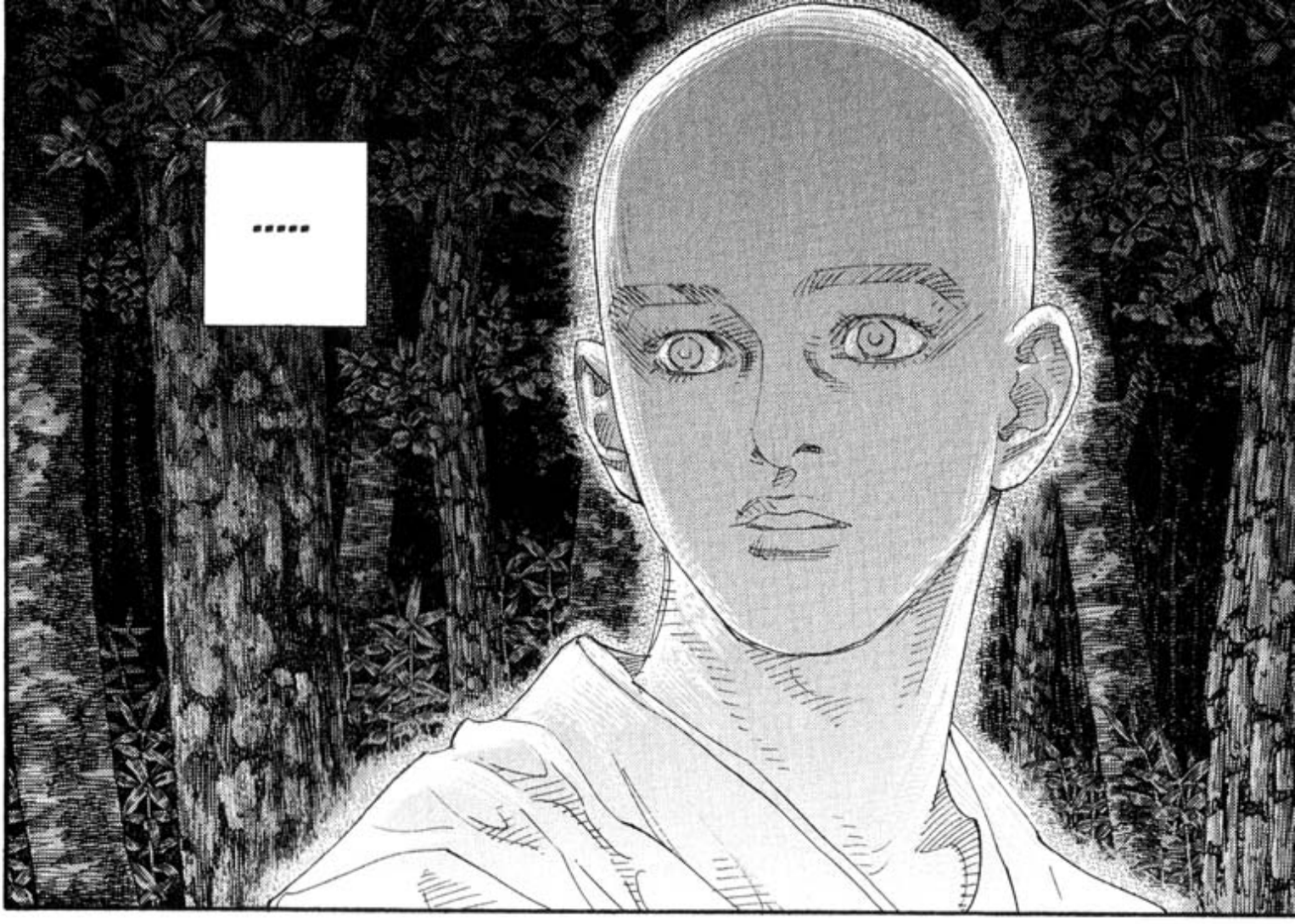

ADMIRATION ...
...TURNED INTO FEAR.

...BUT YOU ALSO BECAME INCREASINGLY MORE ISOLATED...

HUF
HUF


GASP!

THAT'S ME!!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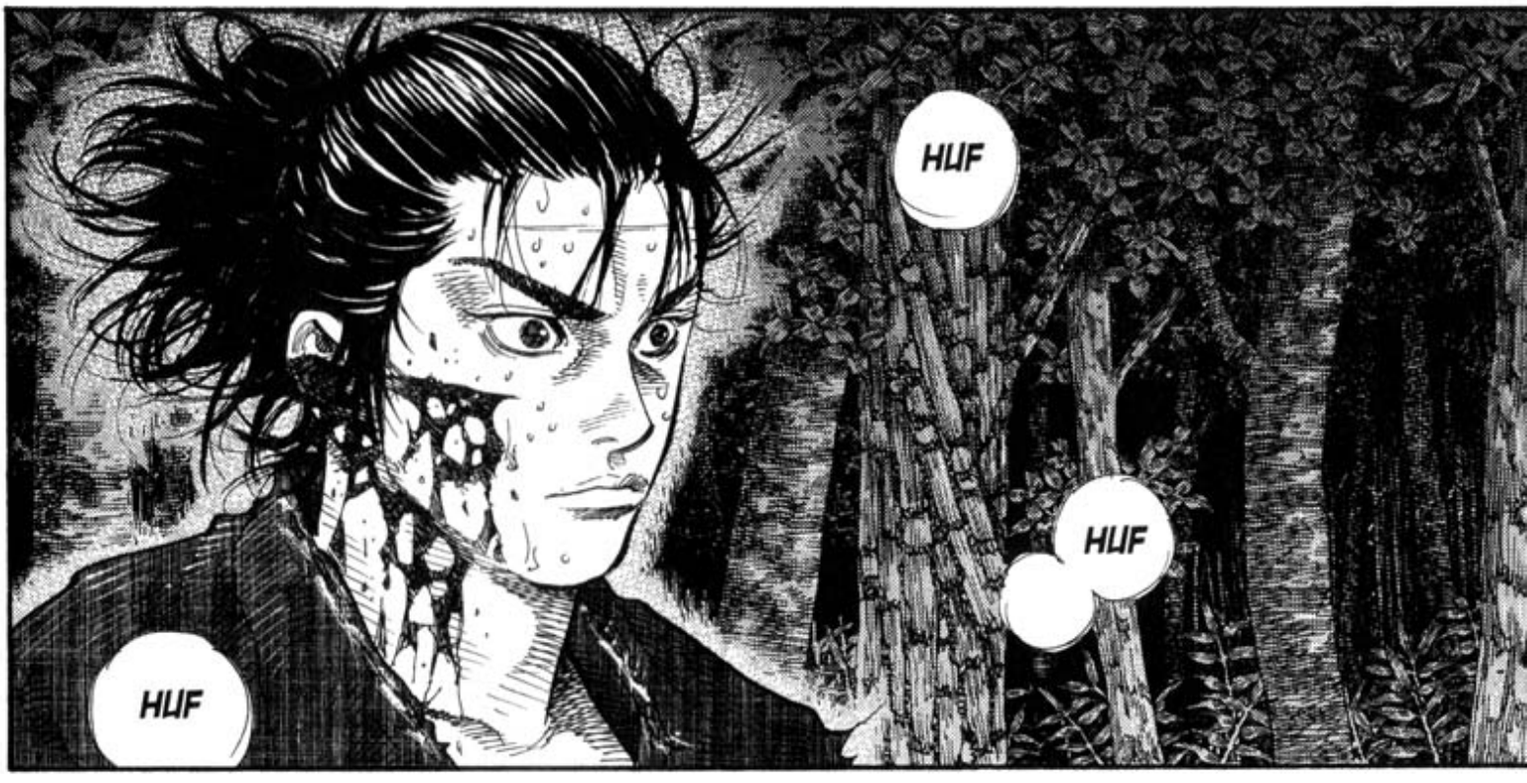
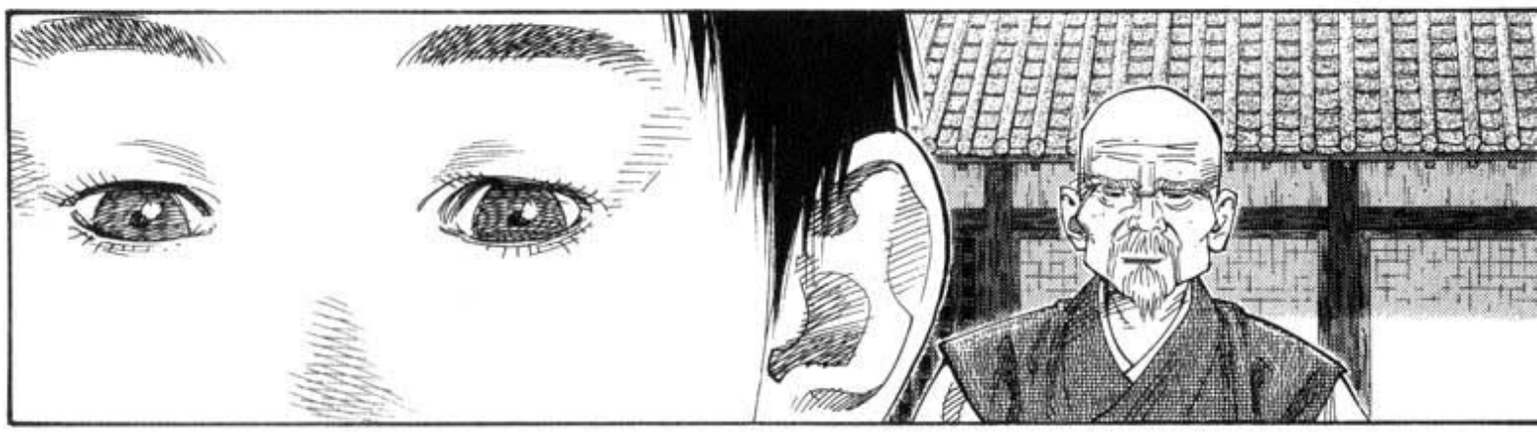

HUF
HUF
HUF

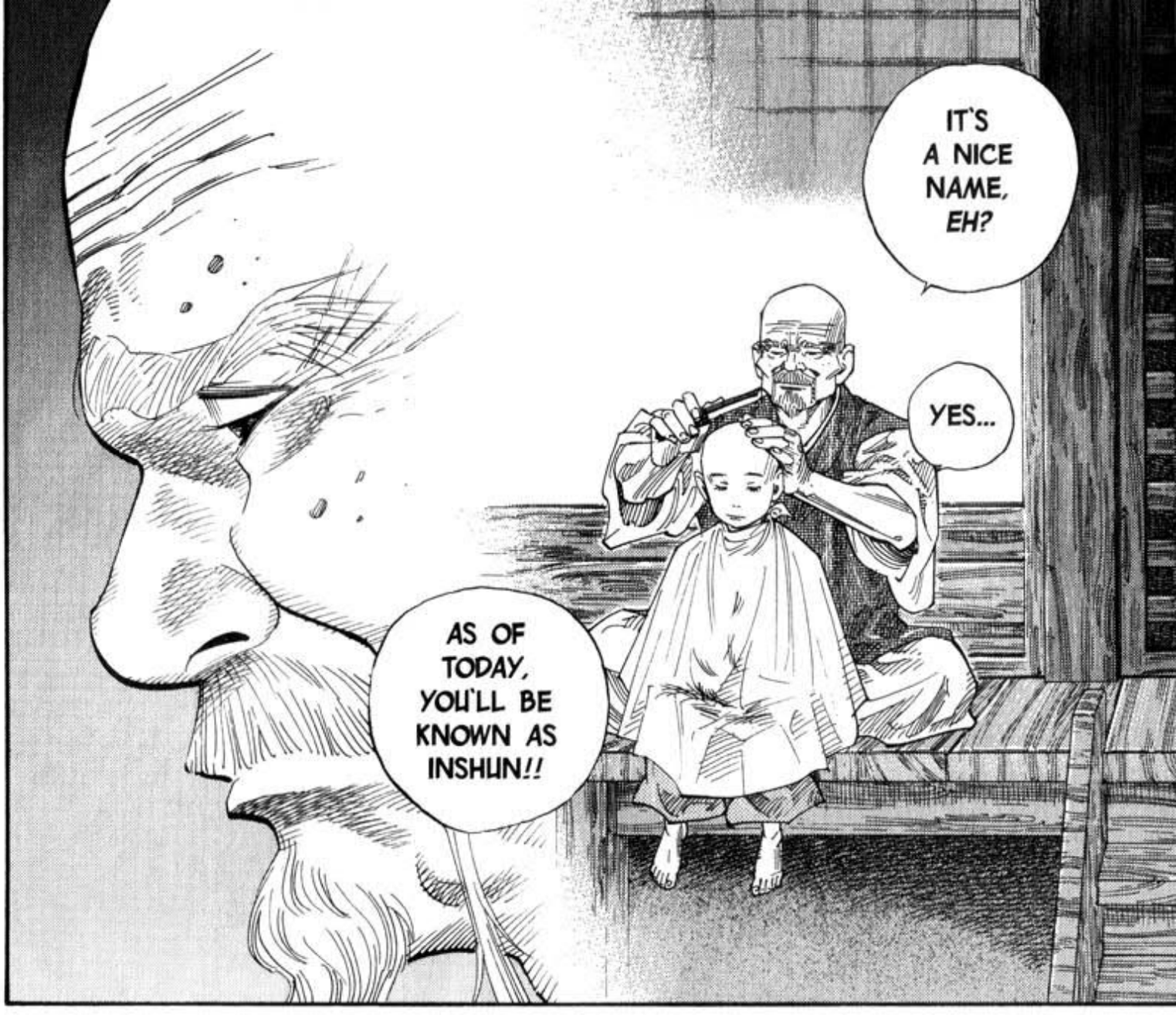
BUT I...
...I STILL ADMIRE YOUR STRENGTH, EVEN NOW...
I'M STILL TRYING TO GET CLOSER TO YOUR GREATNESS ...
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU MIGHT THINK OF THIS...
BUT I STILL CONSIDER YOU MY FRIEND.
HEY...
.....

SHUF
SHUF

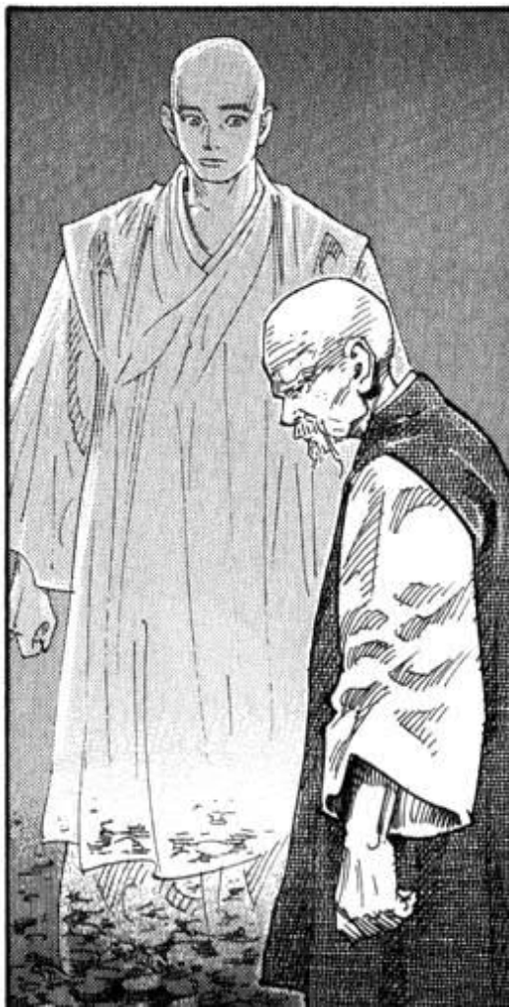


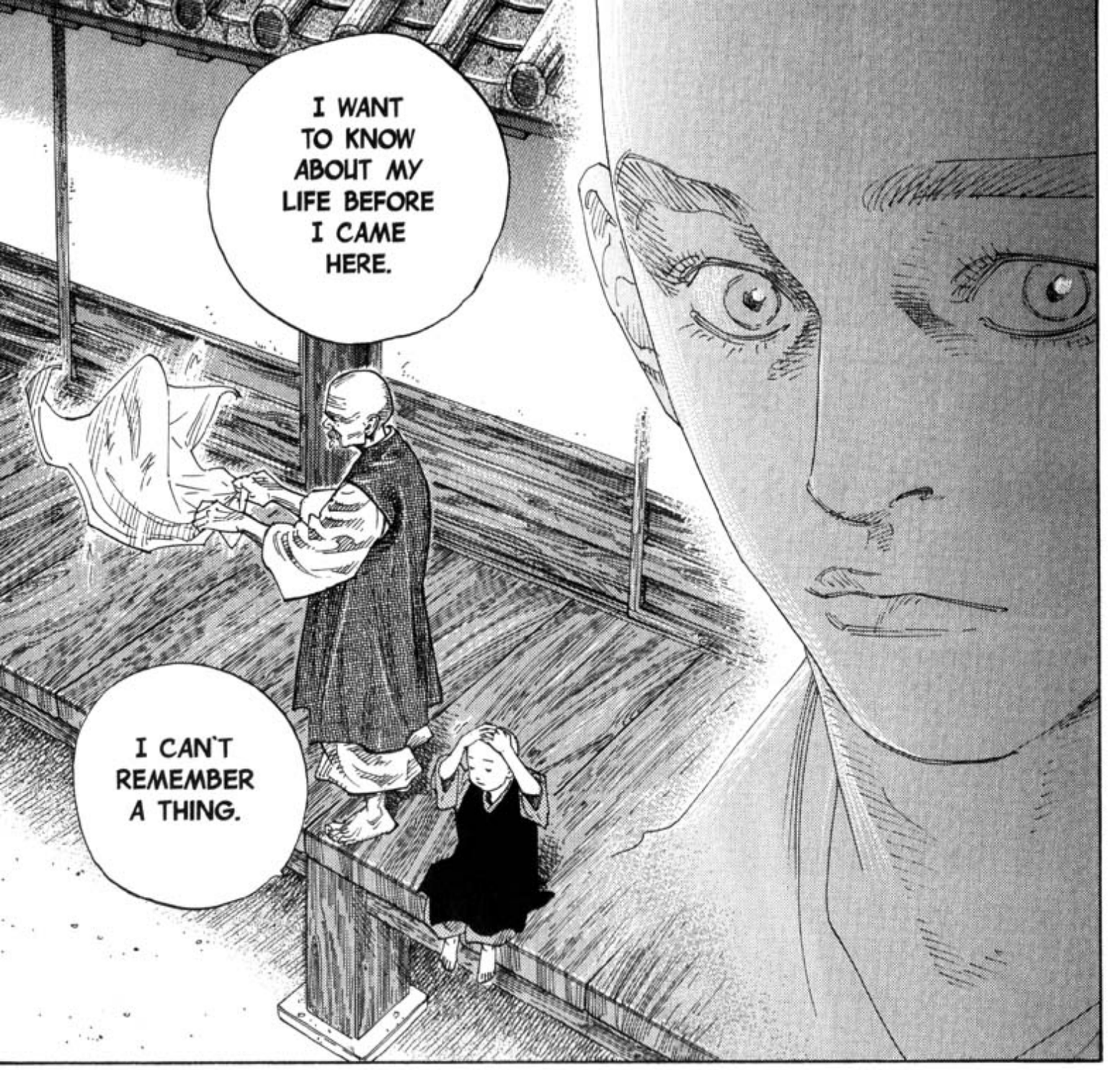
INSHUN...

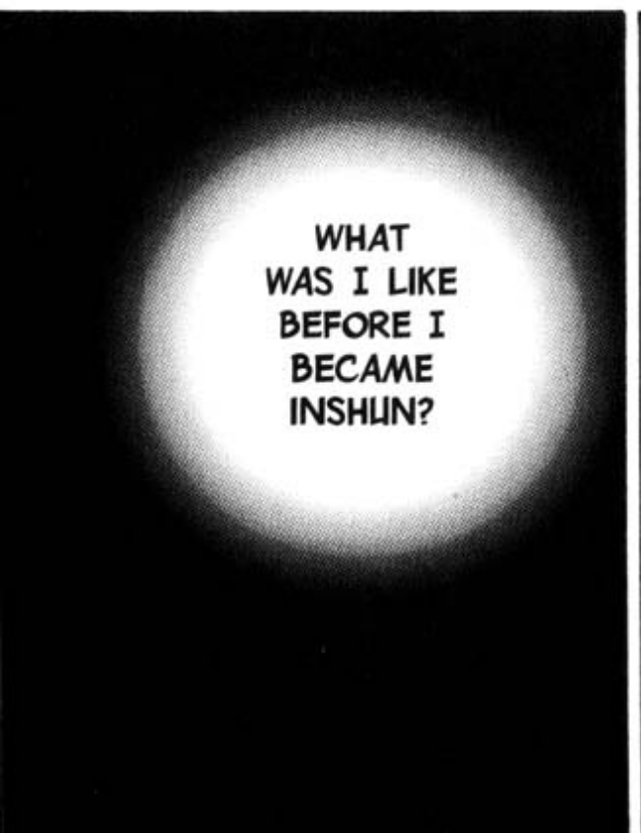
THAT'S MY NAME?
I USED A CHARACTER FROM MY NAME.
"INSHUN."
INSHUN...


IT'S A NICE NAME, EH?
YES...
AS OF TODAY, YOU'LL BE KNOWN AS INSHUN!!

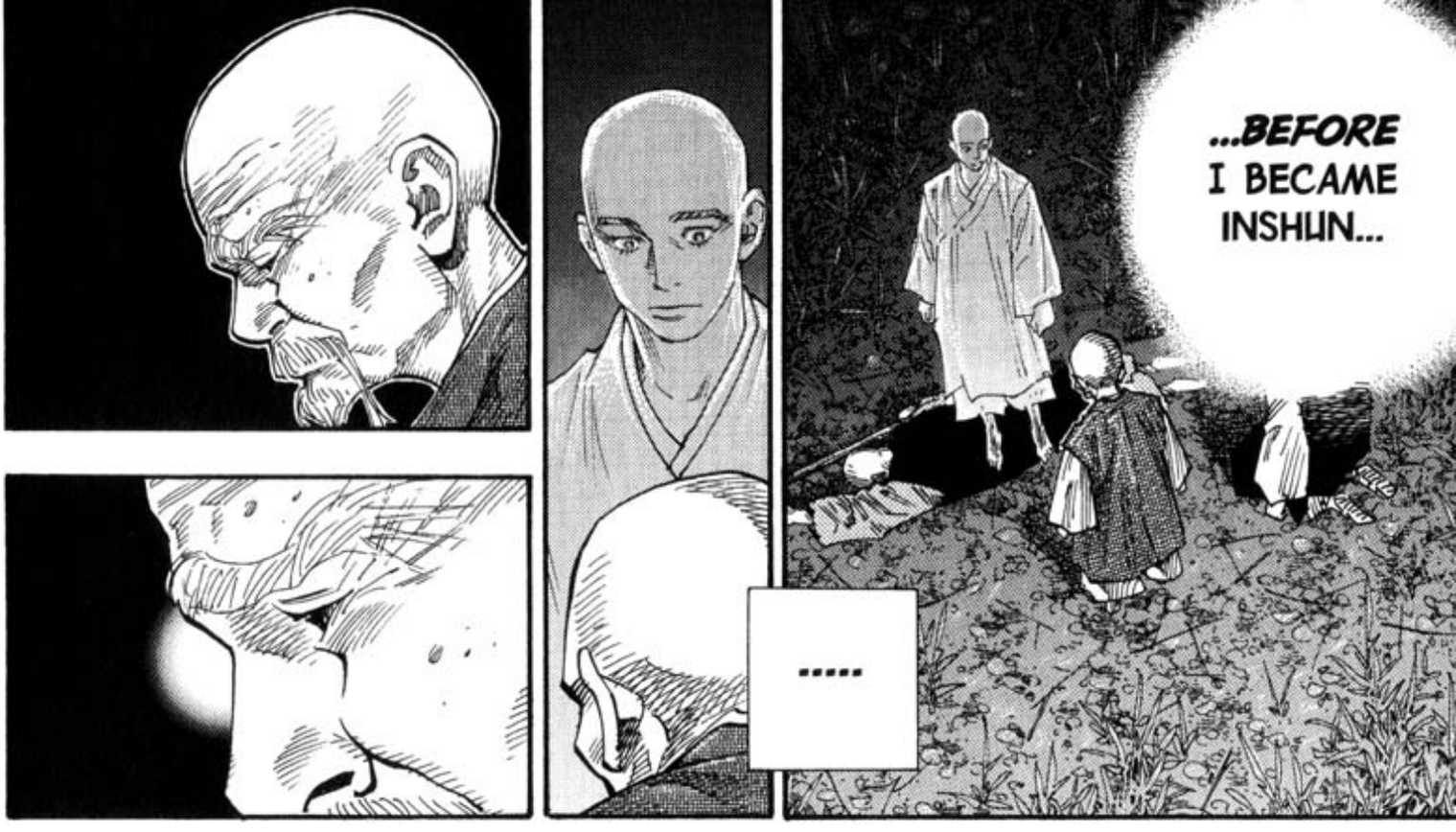
WHAT ABOUT BEFORE?
WHAT WAS MY NAME BEFORE THAT?

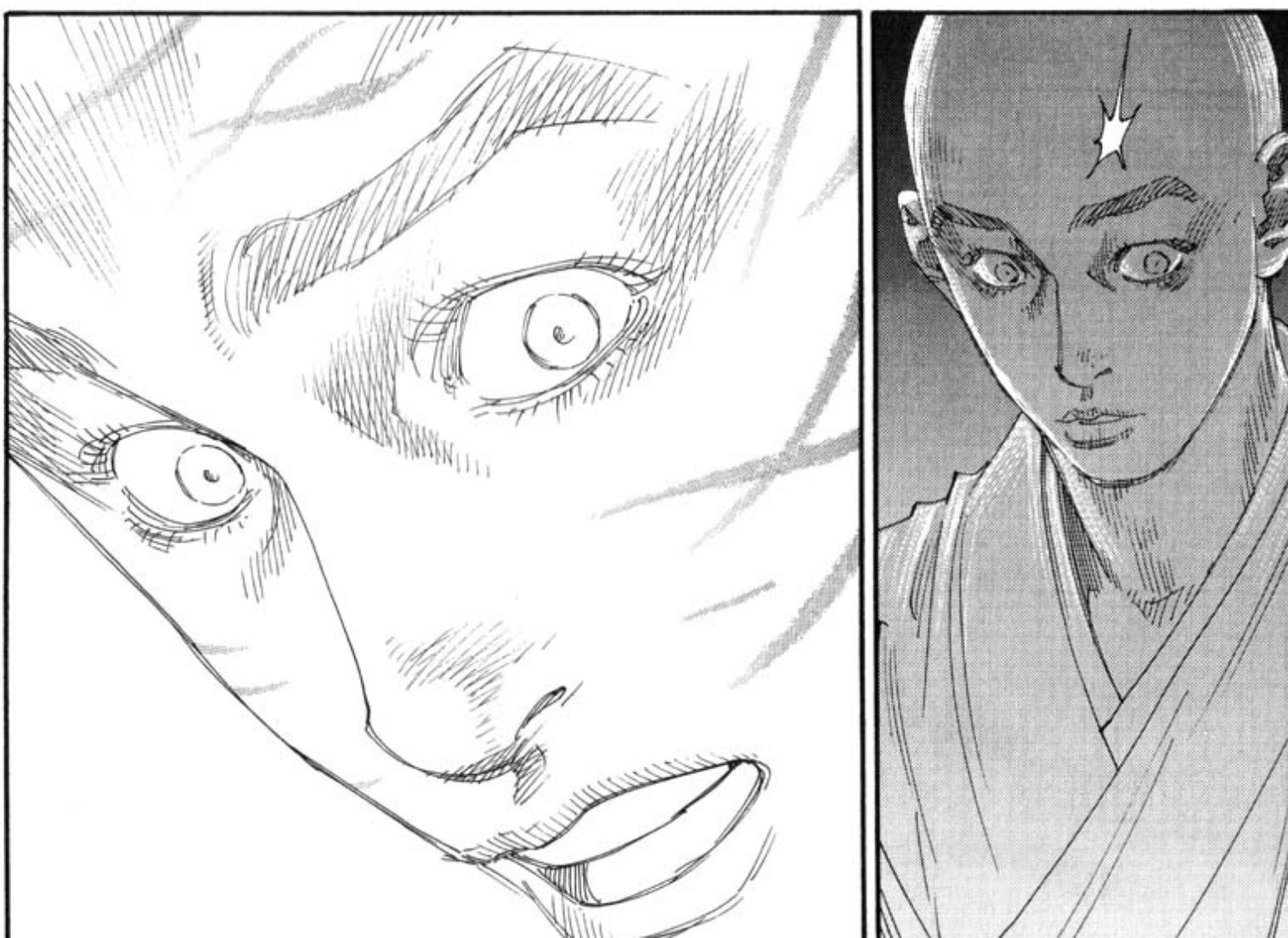



I WANT TO KNOW ABOUT MY LIFE BEFORE I CAME HERE.
I CAN'T REMEMBER A THING.


WHAT WAS I LIKE BEFORE I BECAME INSHUN?

WHENEVER I TRY TO REMEMBER ...
...MY BODY STARTS TO TINGLE...
...AND EVERYTHING BLACKS OUT...


...BEFORE
I BECAME
INSHUN...
.....



SHINNOSUKE!!

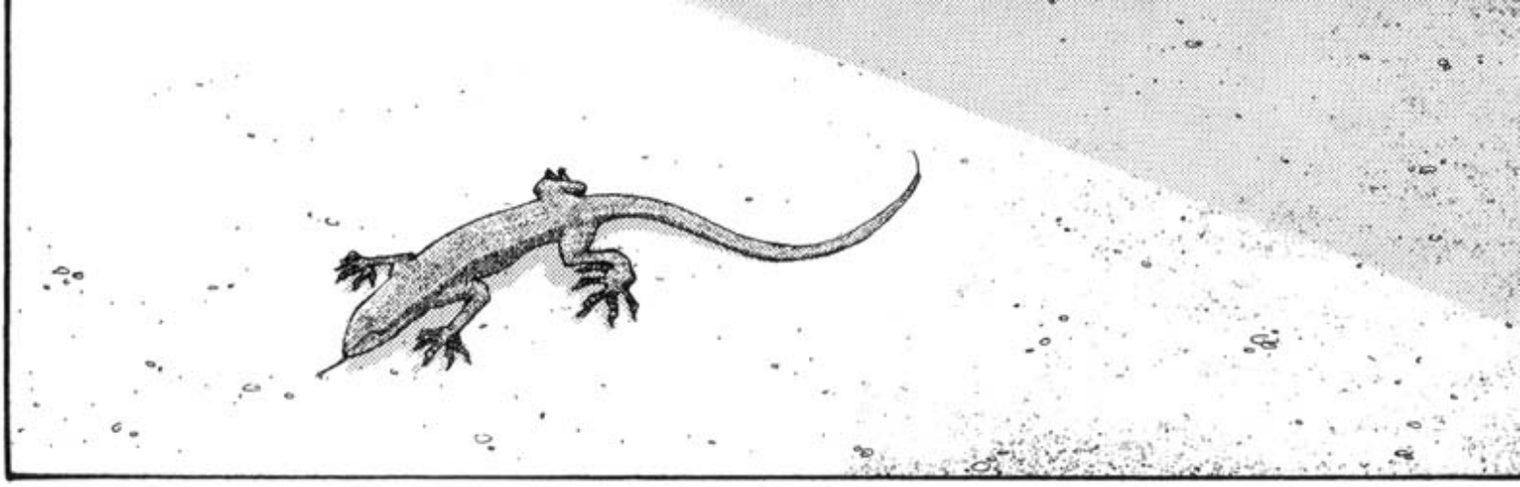
COULD THIS BE...
...MASTER IN'EI'S MEMORIES?
OR...

YAHH!
KLAKK
THWAK
TOK
YAHH!
HAH!
KLAKK

FOOP
YAHH!

KLAK
THOK
NNGH!
WHAT WAS THAT!?
URGH ...
HEH HEH
MITSUDA ...
CAN'T SWING A SPEAR AS IF IT WERE A SWORD.
URGH!
HRMPH!
HAD ENOUGH?
HA HA
HMPH!
YOU'RE LUCKY MASTER IN'EI IS WILLING TO BE YOUR OPPONENT.
DAMN... I MAY BE A BEGINNER IN SPEAR FIGHTING, BUT IT SHOULDN'T BE THIS DIFFICULT...

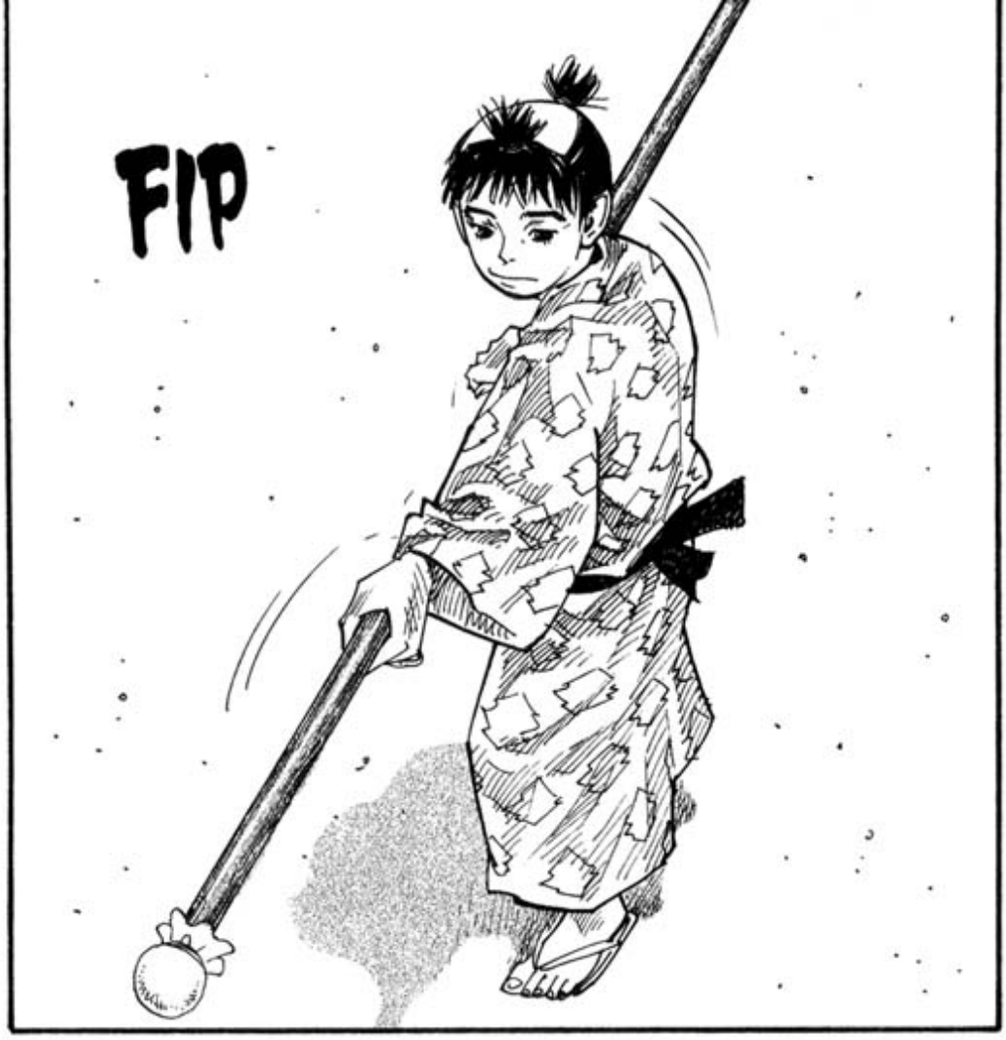
#72 Shinnosuke



FOOM
HUF
HUF
HUF
!!

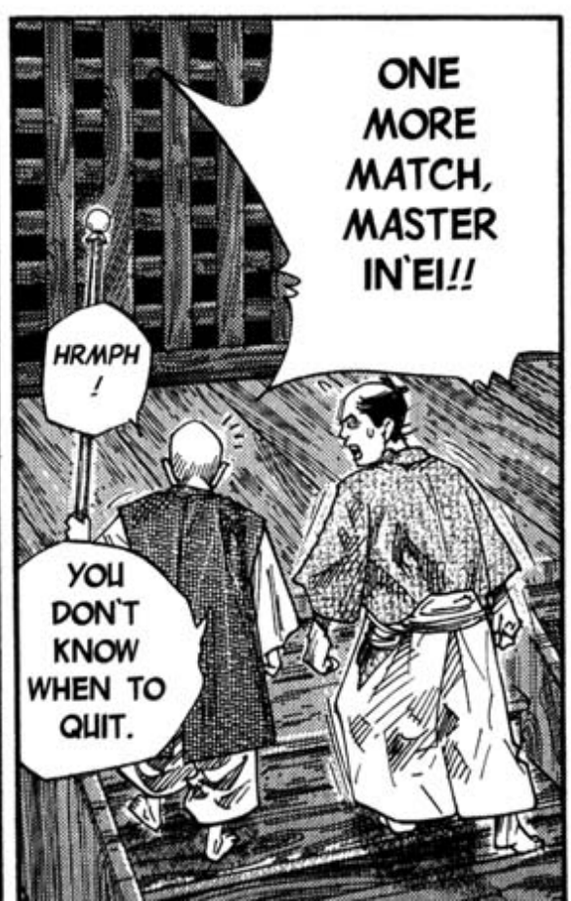
WHAT'S WRONG, SHINNOSUKE?
DON'T YOU LIKE SPEAR FIGHTING ?

AS A MAN BORN INTO THE MITSUDA FAMILY...
...YOU, TOO, WILL EVENTUALLY LEARN THE MARTIAL ARTS...
YOU MUST PROTECT THE CLAN.
HRMPH!
KRICH
NNGH...
HMMF!
SHIN...
HM?
SHINNOSUKE...
TRY THIS.
...IT'S OBVIOUS HE'LL BE RECKLESS AND STUBBORN.
AS A SON OF YOURS...


FIP

.....

HE SHOWS GOOD FORM!
...!!


ONE MORE MATCH, MASTER IN`EI!!
HRMPH !
YOU DON`T KNOW WHEN TO QUIT.

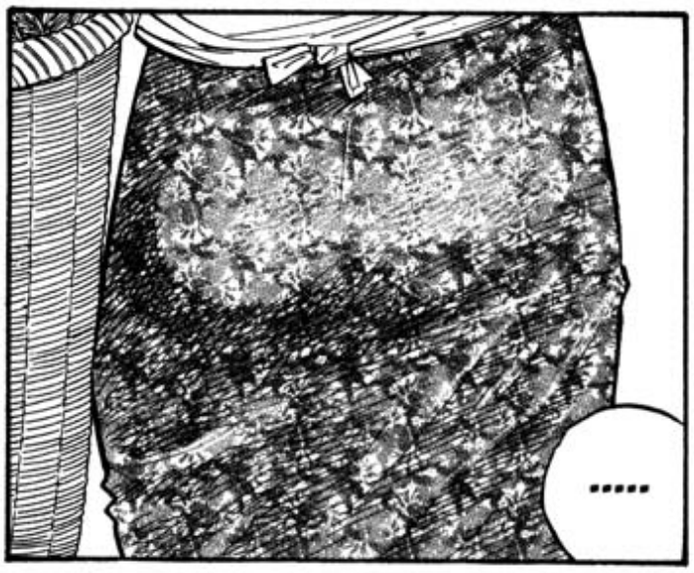
URK
HE`LL BEAT HIS FATHER IN NO TIME, YES HE WILL.
WHAT!?

SHINNOSUKE, GO AHEAD AND JOIN YOUR MOTHER!!
ONE MORE MATCH!!

.....
FWOM
FWOM
AN ERRANT SAMURAI IN TRAINING, I SUPPOSE...
BUT HE LOOKS SUSPICIOUS.
HMPH!
...
YOU LOOK LIKE YOU'RE NOT FROM THIS AREA...
EXCUSE ME...
...
UH...
...NOTHING...
GLARE
WHAT'S IT TO YOU?

I AM SORRY, BUT I WOULD APPRECIATE ANY FOOD YOU COULD SPARE FOR ME...
I'M ASHAMED TO SAY I HAVEN'T EATEN ANYTHING... FOR THREE DAYS.

MY...
...FOR THREE DAYS...!?
THIS MAN...
...MAKES ME FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE.
HUF
HUF
SHINNOSUKE!
LET'S GO HOME.
MNCH
MNCH
MNCH


.....

HMM

KRICH

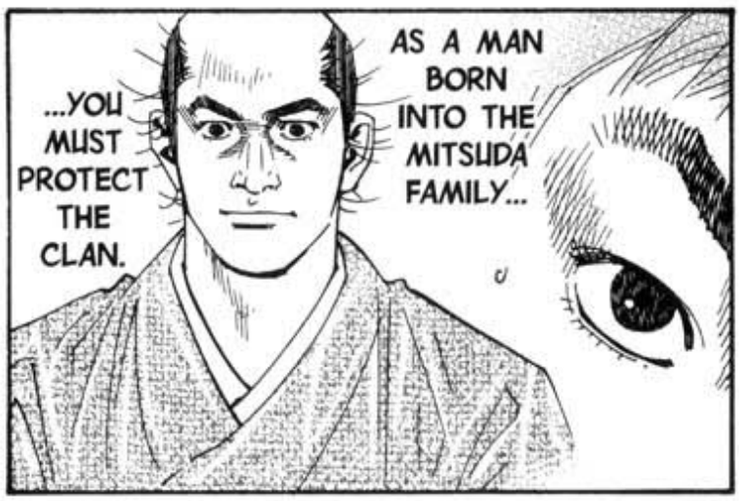
...!!
HE'S FOLLOWING US...
HE'S FOLLOWING US!

.....

SHUF
SHUF

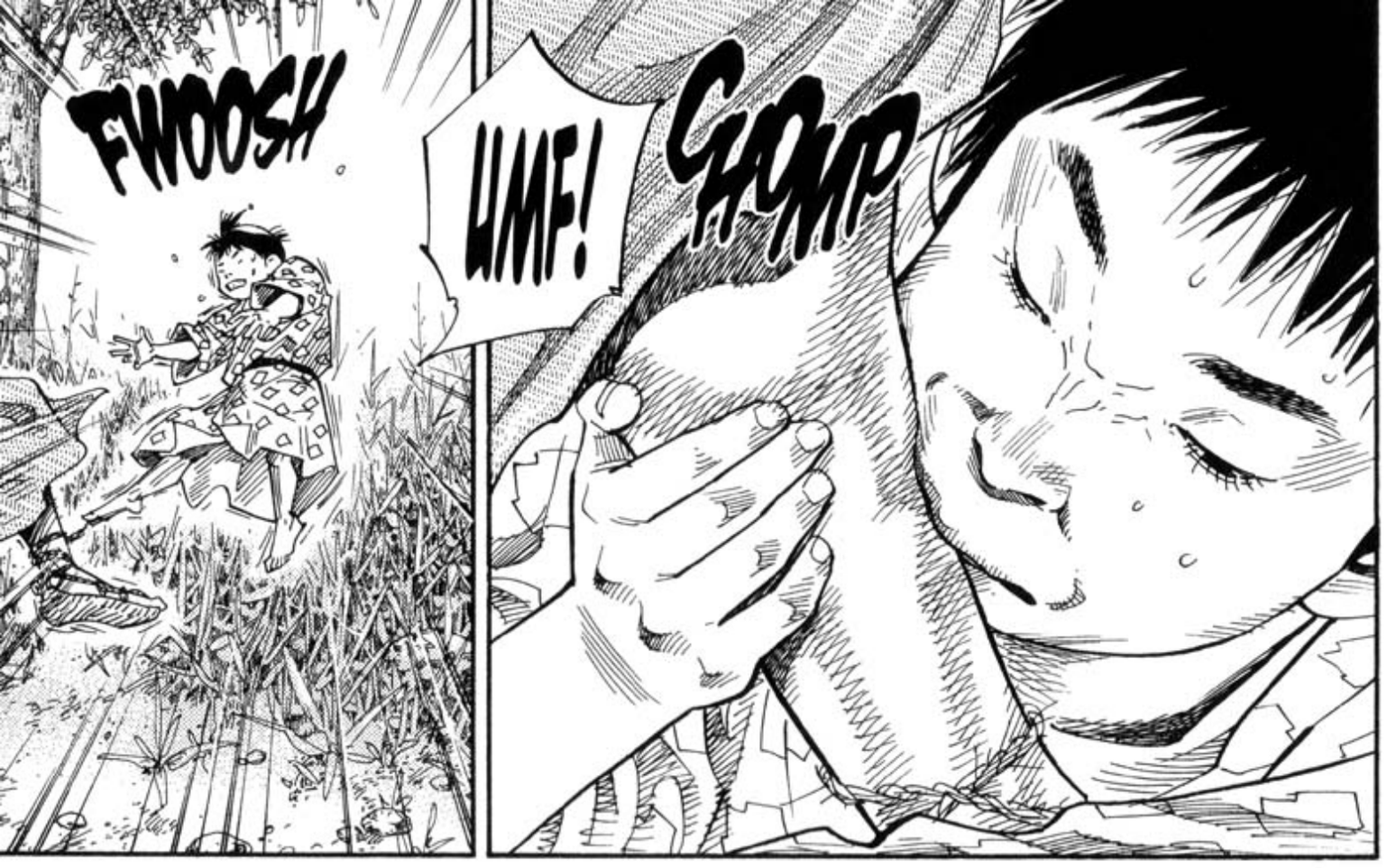
FWISH
!!
MOTHER...
RUN, SHINNOSUKE !!
!!
FWUD
GASP!!

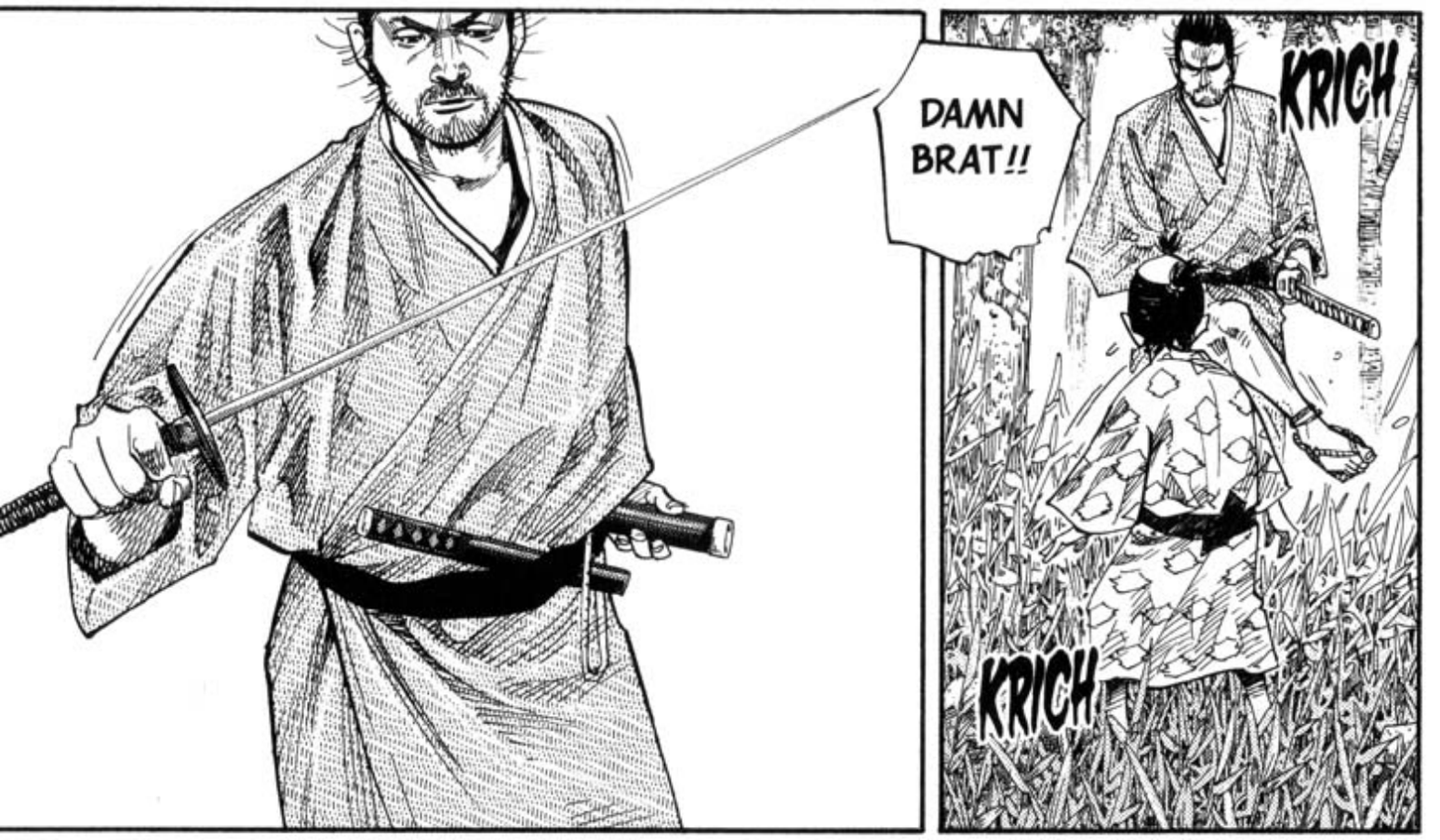
!

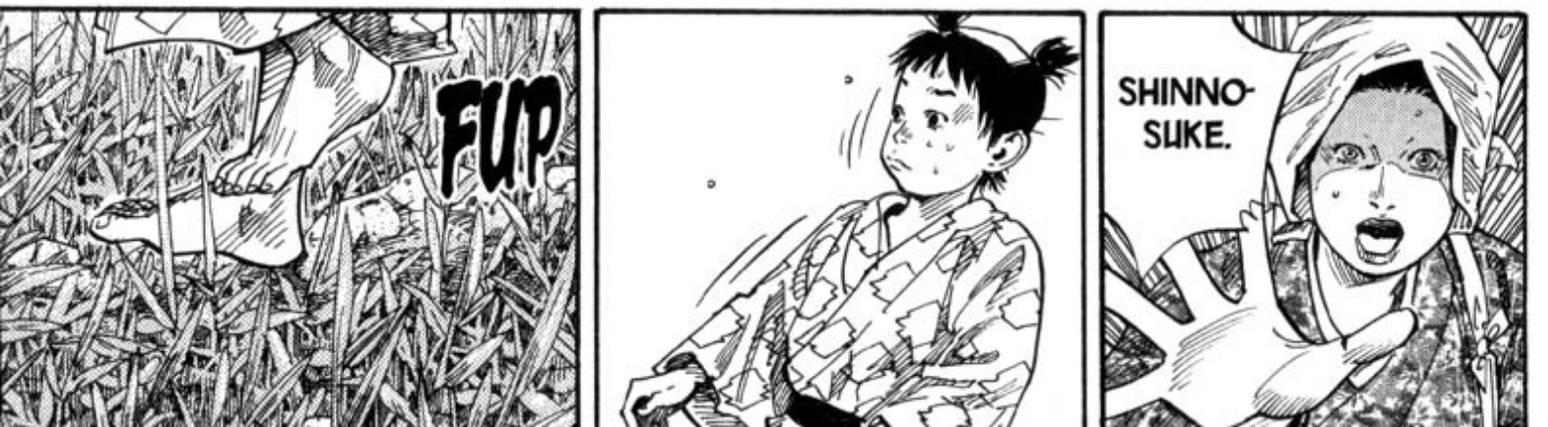

AS A MAN BORN INTO THE MITSUDA FAMILY...
...YOU MUST PROTECT THE CLAN.

HMPH!
SHWUP

YOUR MOTHER'S A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN.
KRICH


FWOOSH
UMF!
CHOMP


DAMN BRAT!!
KRICH
KRICH


FUP
SHINNO-SUKE.

HUF
DON'T STRUGGLE.
FP
HUF
I WON'T TAKE YOUR LIFE!!
FP
HUF
FP
HUF
FP

SHINNOSUKE...

ZINGG
ZINGG

SHEEK

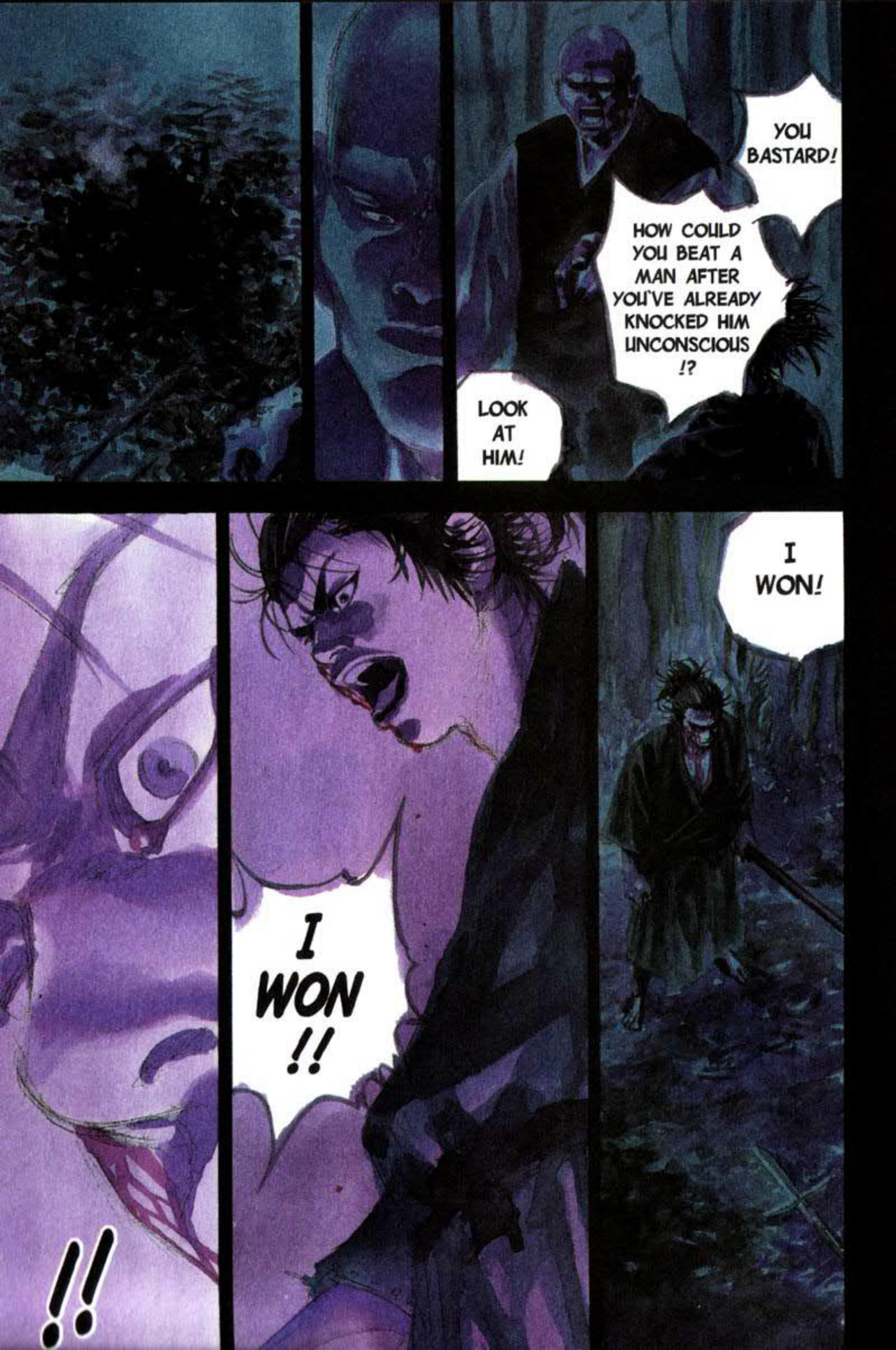
SHINNOSUKE!!

THUNK

ARGH!

MOTHER...

Vagabond


YOU BASTARD!
HOW COULD YOU BEAT A MAN AFTER YOU'VE ALREADY KNOCKED HIM UNCONSCIOUS !?
LOOK AT HIM!
I WON!
I WON !!
!!

#73 | Playing in the Sand

MOTHER...

SAYA--!!
SHINNOSUKE !!
FATHER...!!
!!
WHO THE HELL ARE YOU!?

FWISH
THE HUSBAND, HUH?
FWSSSHH
SHNAK

FWUMP

SPLORT

SAYA...
...SHIN...
WHUD
...SHINNO-SUKE...

HEY, SHINNOSUKE ...
YOUR FATHER FORGOT TO TAKE THE PICKLES I GAVE HIM.
MY DELICIOUS PICKLES--!

!!
FWOM
BRR
BRR
BRR

SHINNOSUKE ...!!

WHAT IS IT...
...TO BE STRONG?
THWAK
YAHH!
INSHUN...
...THE SECOND GENERATION MASTER OF HŌZŌIN!!

WHAT IS...
...STRENGTH ?
MUSASHI...
...FLOATING UPWARDS...
SOME-THING DARK RED...
WHAT IS THIS...?

I WANT TO RISK MY LIFE IN BATTLE.
MORTAL COMBAT.
I WANT TO PEEK AT THE BRINK OF DEATH.
MORTAL COMBAT...

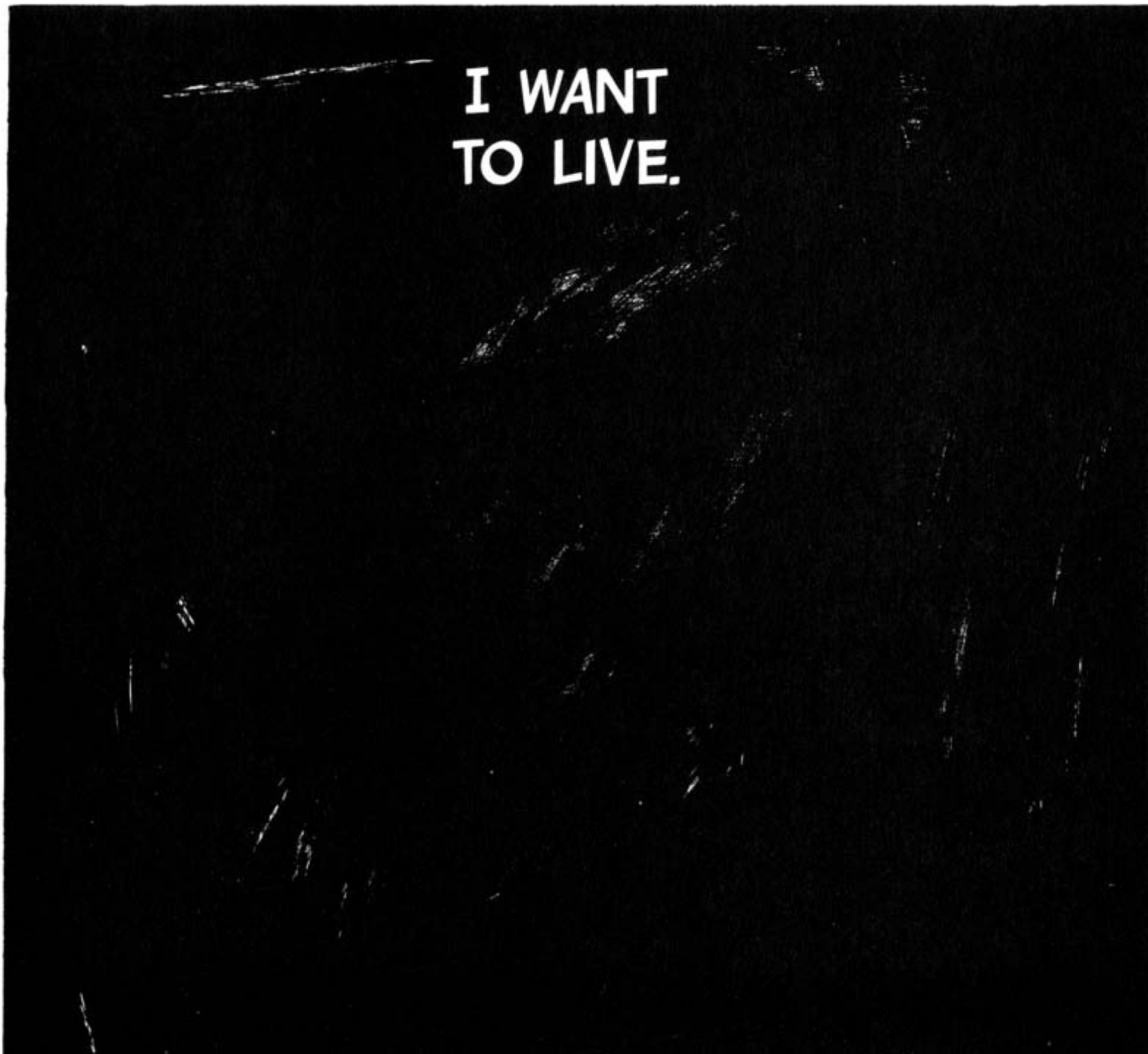
I WANTED TO BECOME STRONG.
I THOUGHT I WAS STRIVING TO BECOME STRONGER...

...BUT I WAS ONLY COVERING THINGS UP WITH SAND...

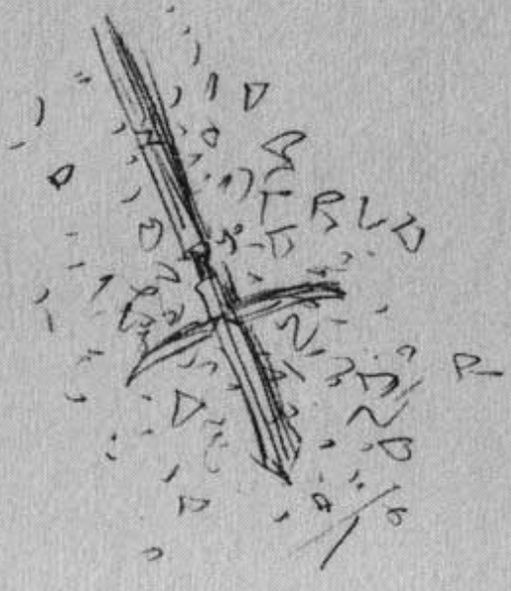
...MY GUILT...
...MY WEAKNESS...
I WANTED TO BECOME INVINCIBLE SO THAT I COULD COVER THEM UP AND BURY THEM...
I'VE NEVER EVEN STEPPED ONE FOOT AWAY FROM THIS PLACE...

I COVERED MYSELF UP...
WITH NOTHING TO OFFER ANYONE.

I WAS ALL ALONE...
WITHDRAWN INTO MYSELF...
...WHERE NO ONE COULD REACH ME.


I WANT
TO LIVE.

Vagabond



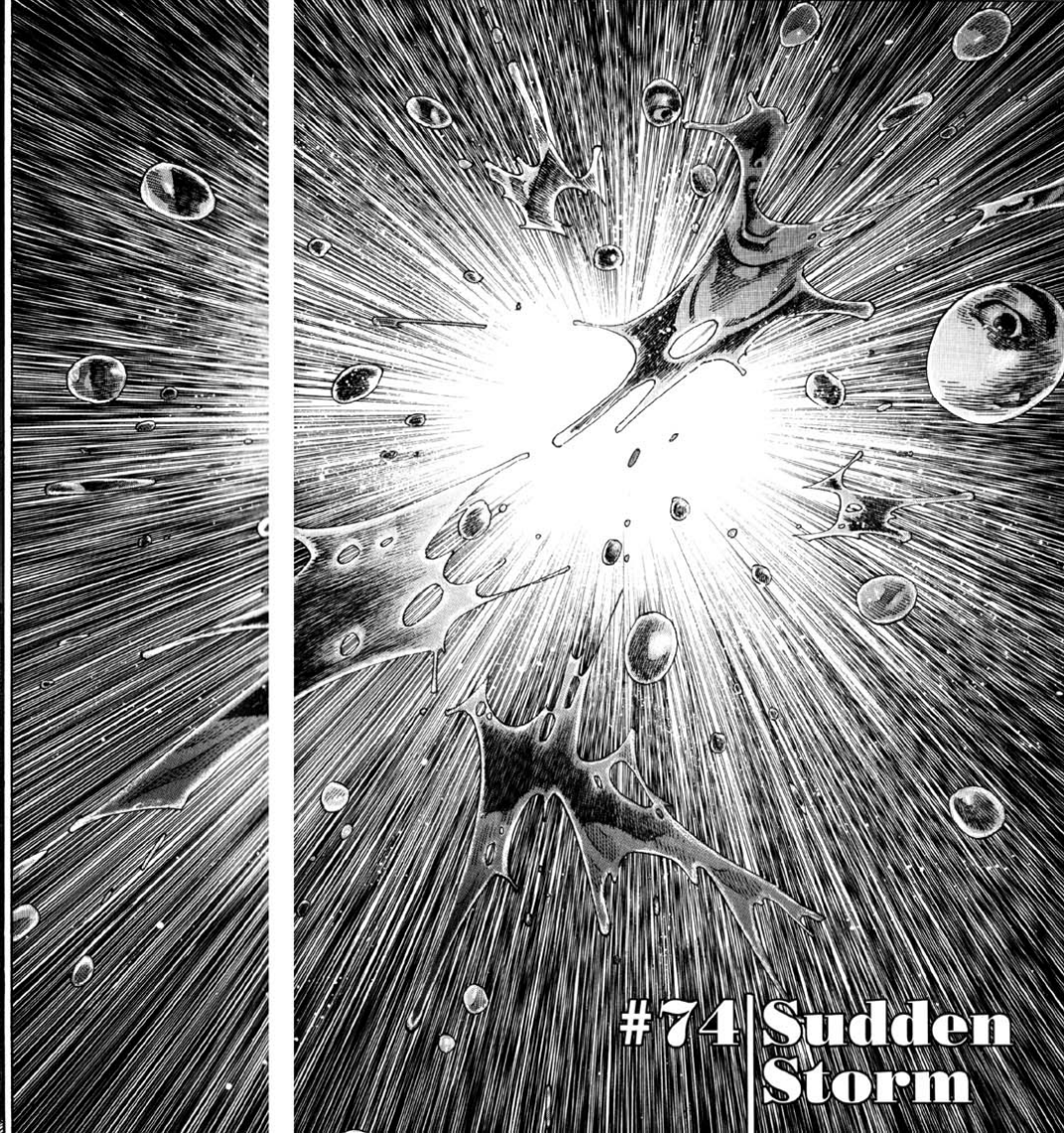
...ALONE FOREVER...?

THAT'S MY BODY...

WAIT!

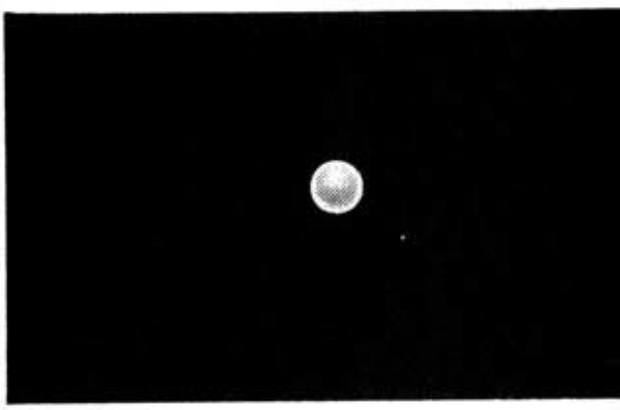
WAIT...

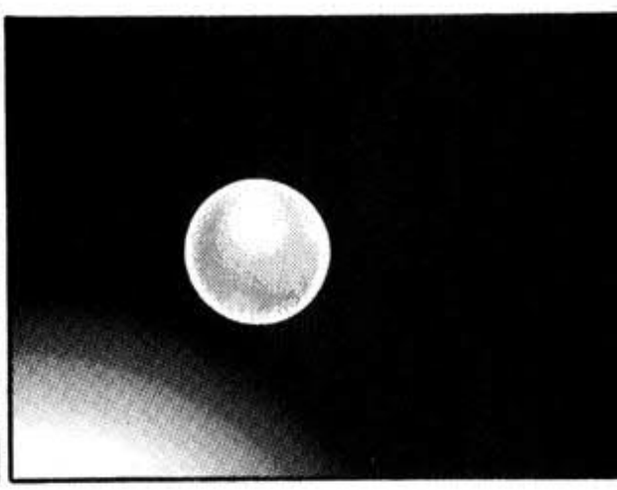
AM I TO REMAIN...



#74 Sudden Storm

PLISH





HM!?
MUSASHI!
YOUR SWORDS-MANSHIP IS AWFUL.
IT'S PRACTICALLY A JOKE.
...!?
WHAT--!?
IS THAT YOU, INSHUN!?

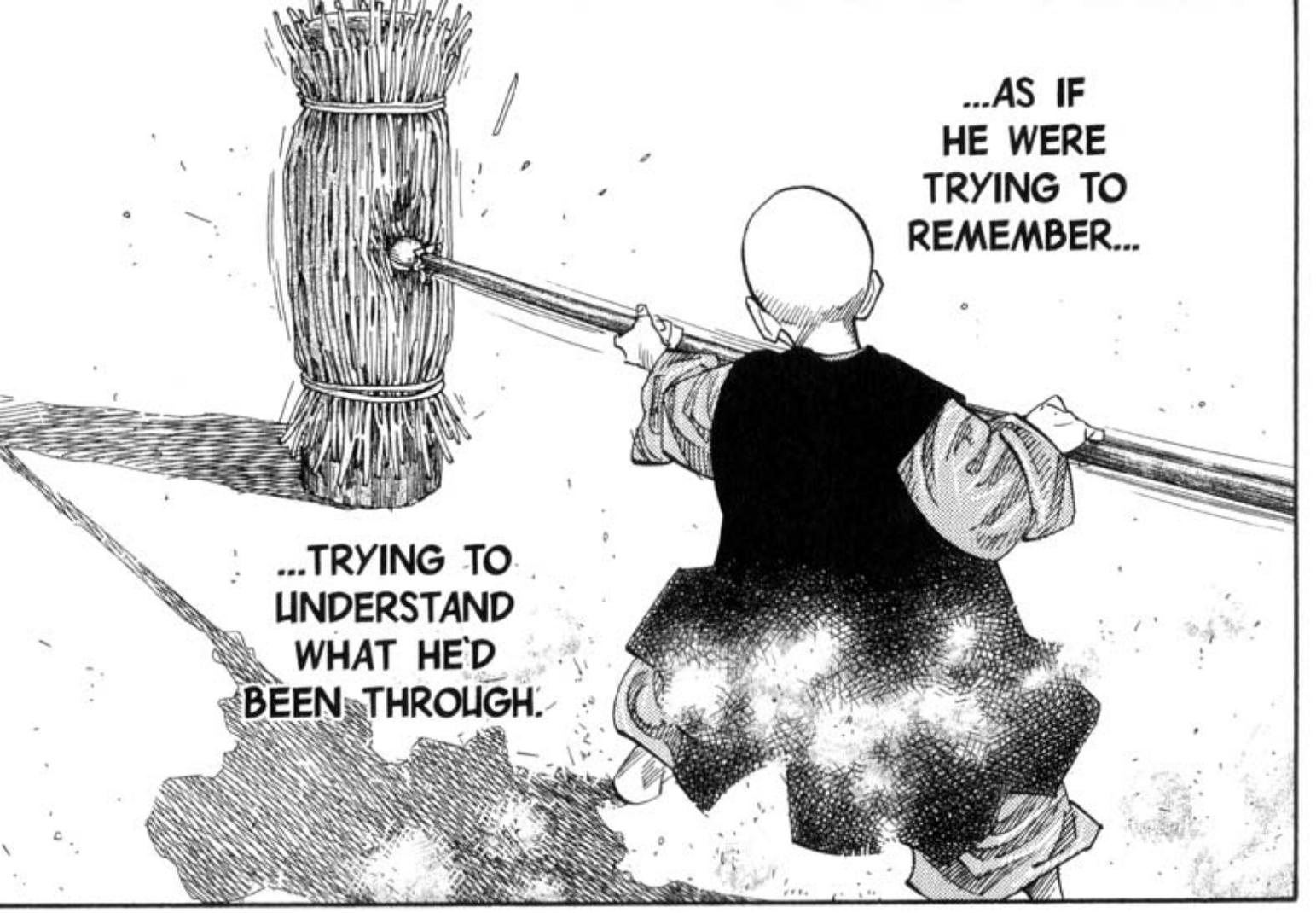
PLISH
AND YET YOU MANAGED TO PUSH ME...
IN A MATTER OF YEARS YOU'LL BECOME AN EXTRAORDINARY FIGHTER.
PLISH
I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO SEEING YOU THEN.
PLISH

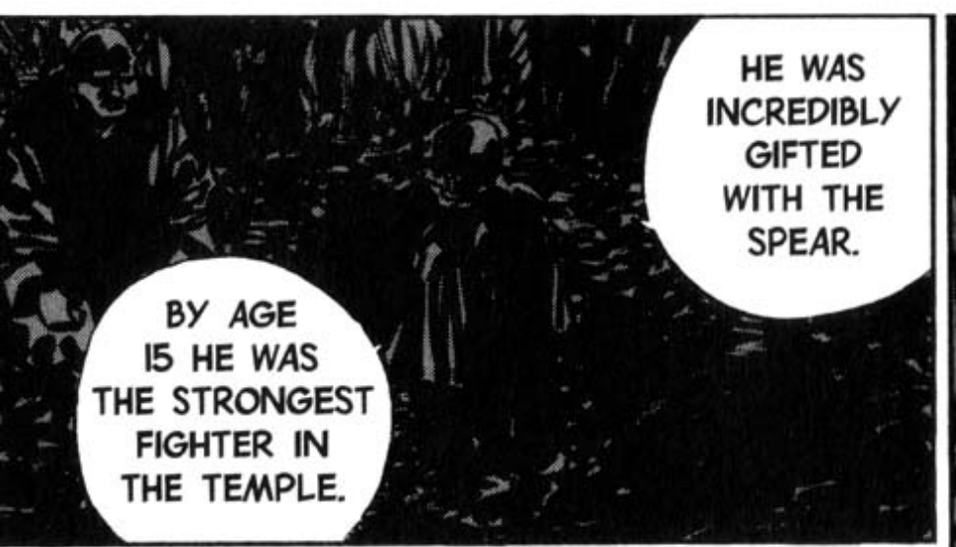
I WANT TO LIVE.
FSSSSHH

FZZ
FZZ
DO YOU HATE ME FOR WHAT I'VE DONE?
OLD MAN...
YES...?

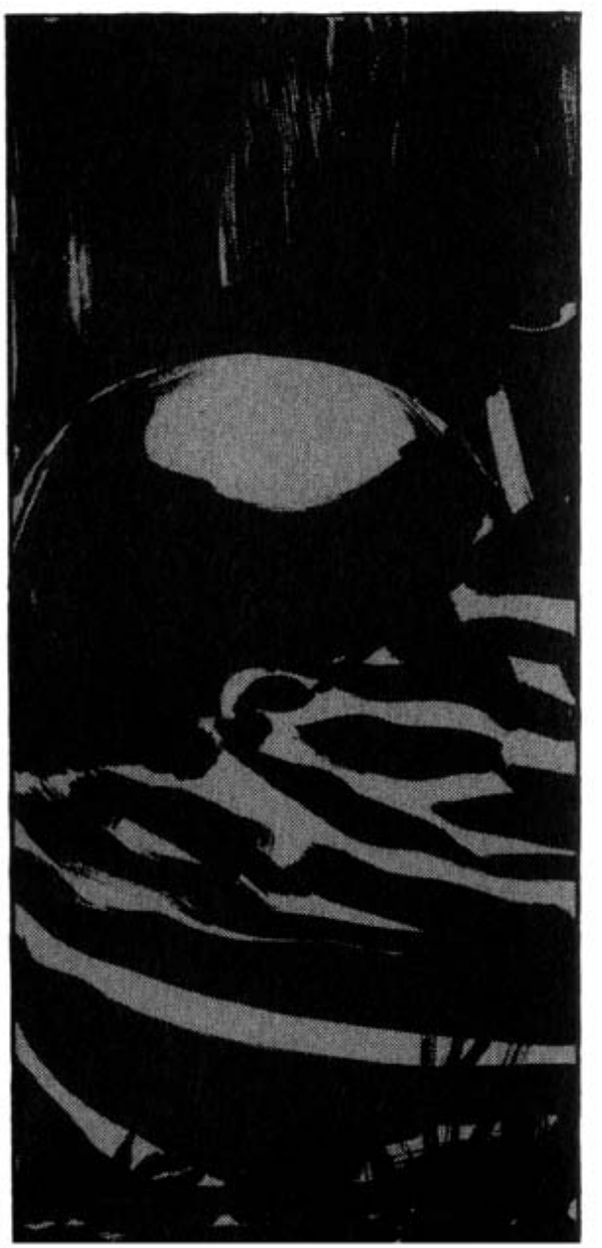
FSSHHHH
YOU TRAINED ME.
I BET YOU DIDN'T THINK INSHUN WOULD DIE.
BUT...
...IF I HADN'T KILLED HIM...
...HE WOULD HAVE KILLED ME.
I KNEW THIS MIGHT HAPPEN...
...TO EXPERIENCE MORTAL COMBAT...
THIS IS WHAT INSHUN WANTED...

I WASN'T ME...
...I DID NOT ENCOURAGE HIM TO LEARN THE SPEAR.
IF ANYTHING, I DISCOURAGED HIM.
HE PICKED UP A SPEAR ON HIS OWN...
...PLAYED WITH IT INSTEAD OF TOYS.
HE WAS SO SERIOUS...
...AND DEDICATED.


...AS IF HE WERE TRYING TO REMEMBER...
...TRYING TO UNDERSTAND WHAT HE'D BEEN THROUGH.


HE WAS INCREDIBLY GIFTED WITH THE SPEAR.
BY AGE 15 HE WAS THE STRONGEST FIGHTER IN THE TEMPLE.

HE COULD NOT BE BEAT...
THE NEXT STEP WAS TO PUT HIS OWN LIFE ON THE LINE IN BATTLE.



BUT INSIDE HE WAS STILL THE SAME SHINNOSUKE...
..STILL ALL BY HIMSELF...
...STILL STRUGGLING...
INSHUN BECAME THE SECOND GENERATION MASTER OF HŌZŌIN TEMPLE.

SIGH...

HUF
HUF
HUF

INSHUN NEEDED TO MOVE FORWARD...
I COULDN'T TEACH HIM EVERYTHING...

I HOLD NOTHING AGAINST YOU.
...I WAS PREPARED FOR THE CONSEQUENCES.
THAT'S WHY I TRAINED YOU, MUSASHI...

CLENCH

HUF
HUF
HUF

I...
I WON, RIGHT...?

THMP
THMP
THMP
THMP
THMP
THMP

I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU'RE STILL STANDING, MUSASHI...
YOU'VE LOST SO MUCH BLOOD...

FWOM
.....

!!

FWUMP

HEAVY...
MY BODY FEELS SO HEAVY...
WHUD
AGON...
TAKE CARE OF THEM.
FSSSHHH

IF WE INCLUDE THE PREVIOUS MATCH...
...IT'S A TIE.
...THERE'S NO WINNER...
HUF
HUF
HUF
THIS DUEL IS NOT TO BE ENTERED INTO THE ANNALS OF HŌZŌIN TEMPLE.
FSSSHH

Vagabond

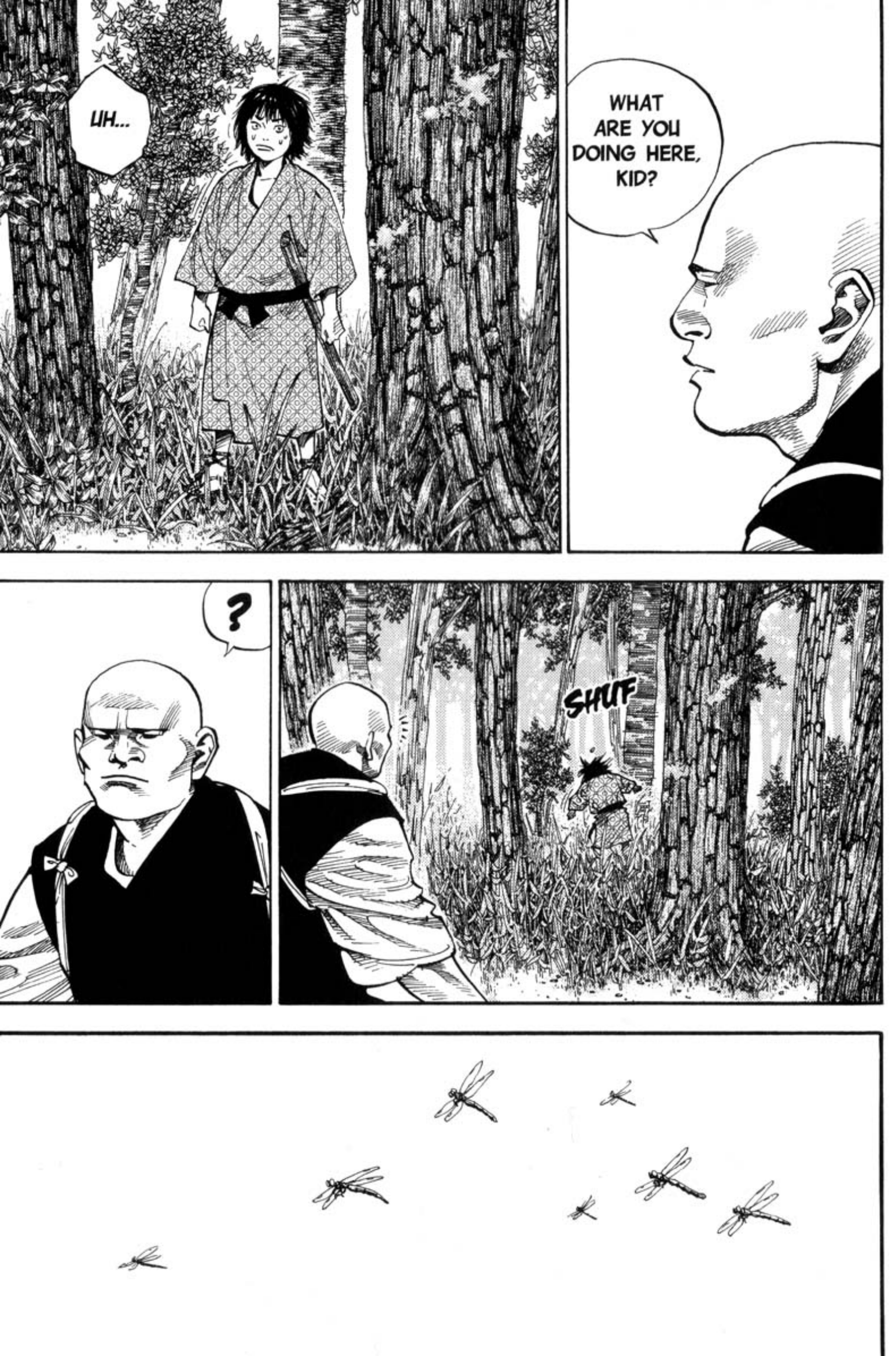
(THESE GUYS ARE AS HEAVY AS CORPSES.)

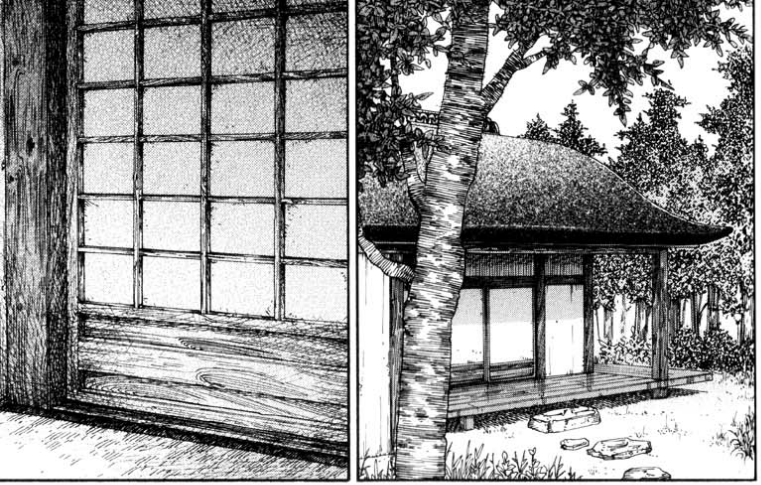
SCRUB
SPLASH
WHY ME...?
WHY DO I HAVE TO WASH MUSASHI'S DIRTY RAGS!?

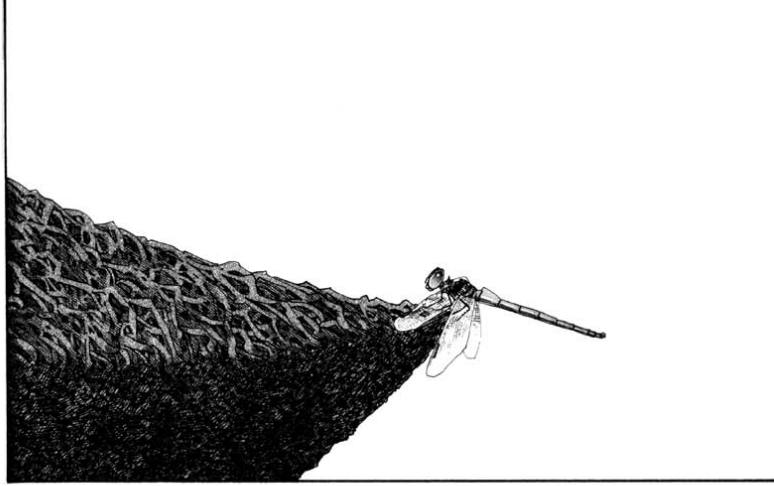
SCRUB
SO MUCH DIRT.
SCRUB
DAMN...
...THEY'RE FILTHY.
.....

.....
HMM...
GASP!
RRIP

!!
GASP!
HEY!

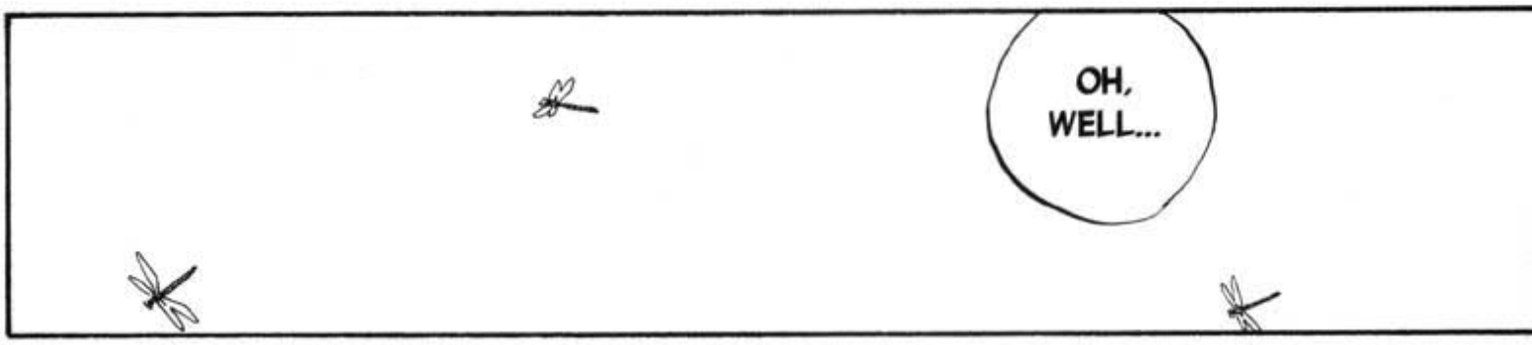

UH...
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE, KID?
?
SHUF





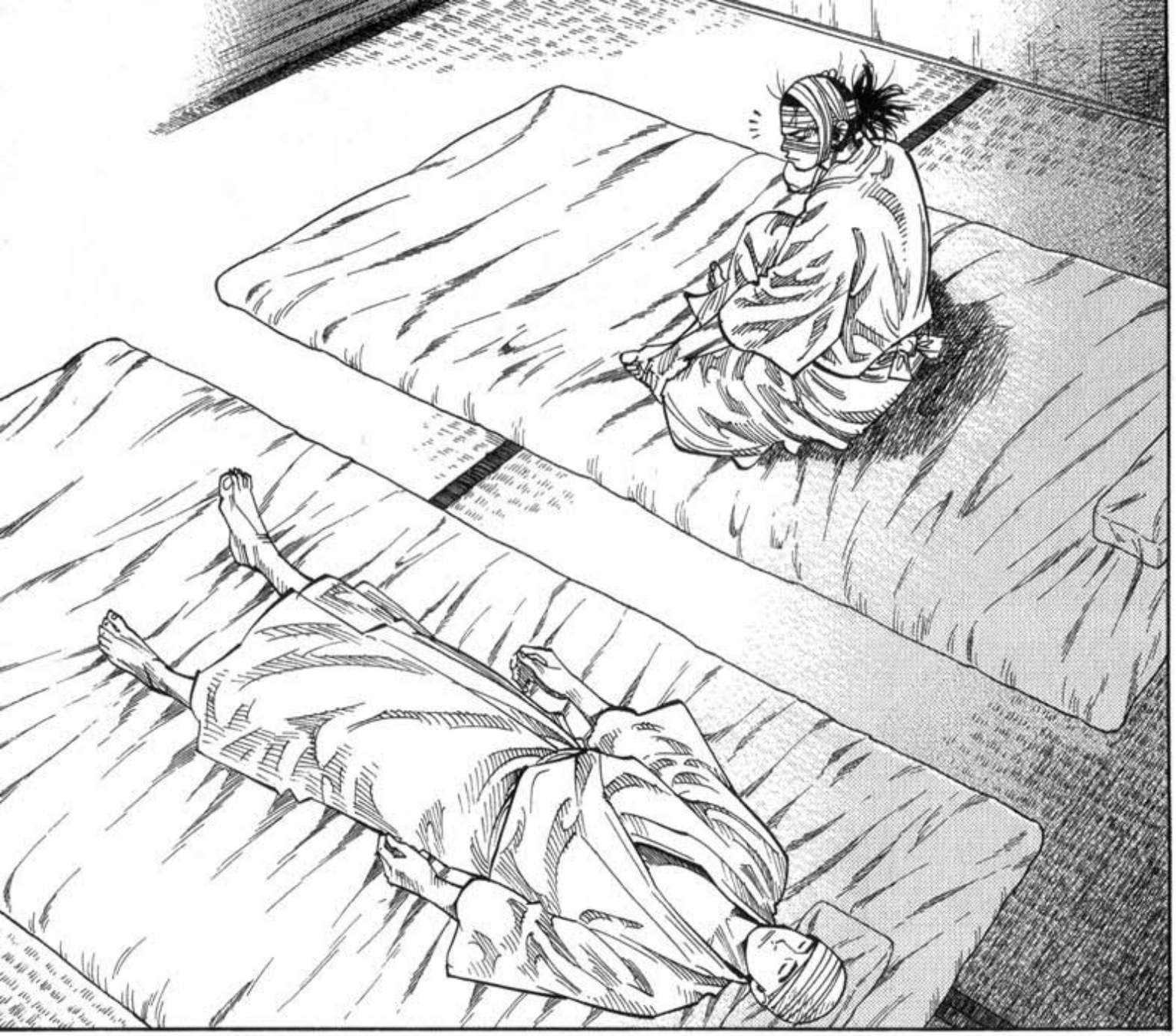
#75|Survivors

.....
OH, NO...
NOW THEY REALLY ARE JUST RAGS.


OH, WELL...

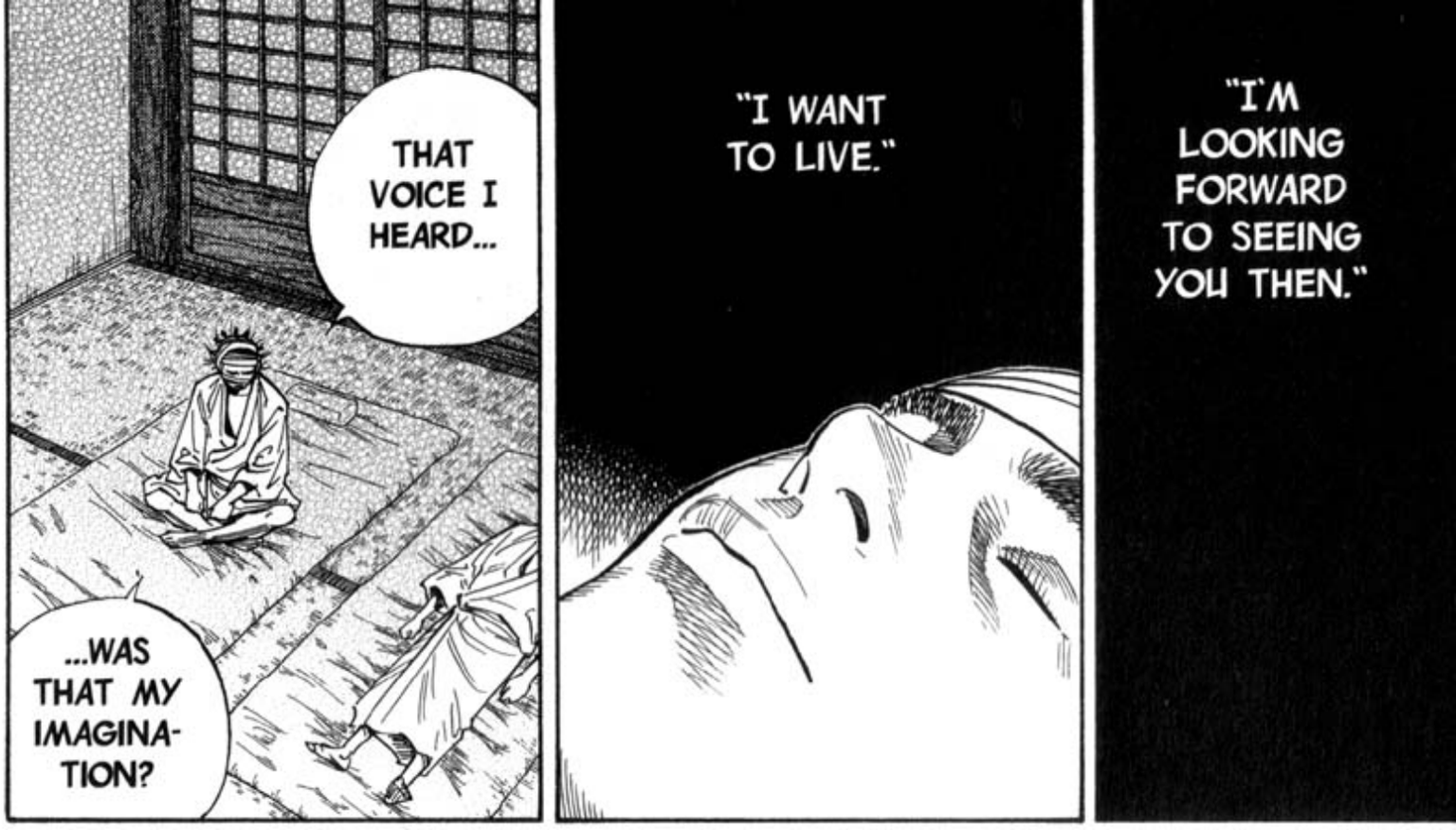
THROB
NNGH.
ARGH!

UNF...
WHERE AM I?



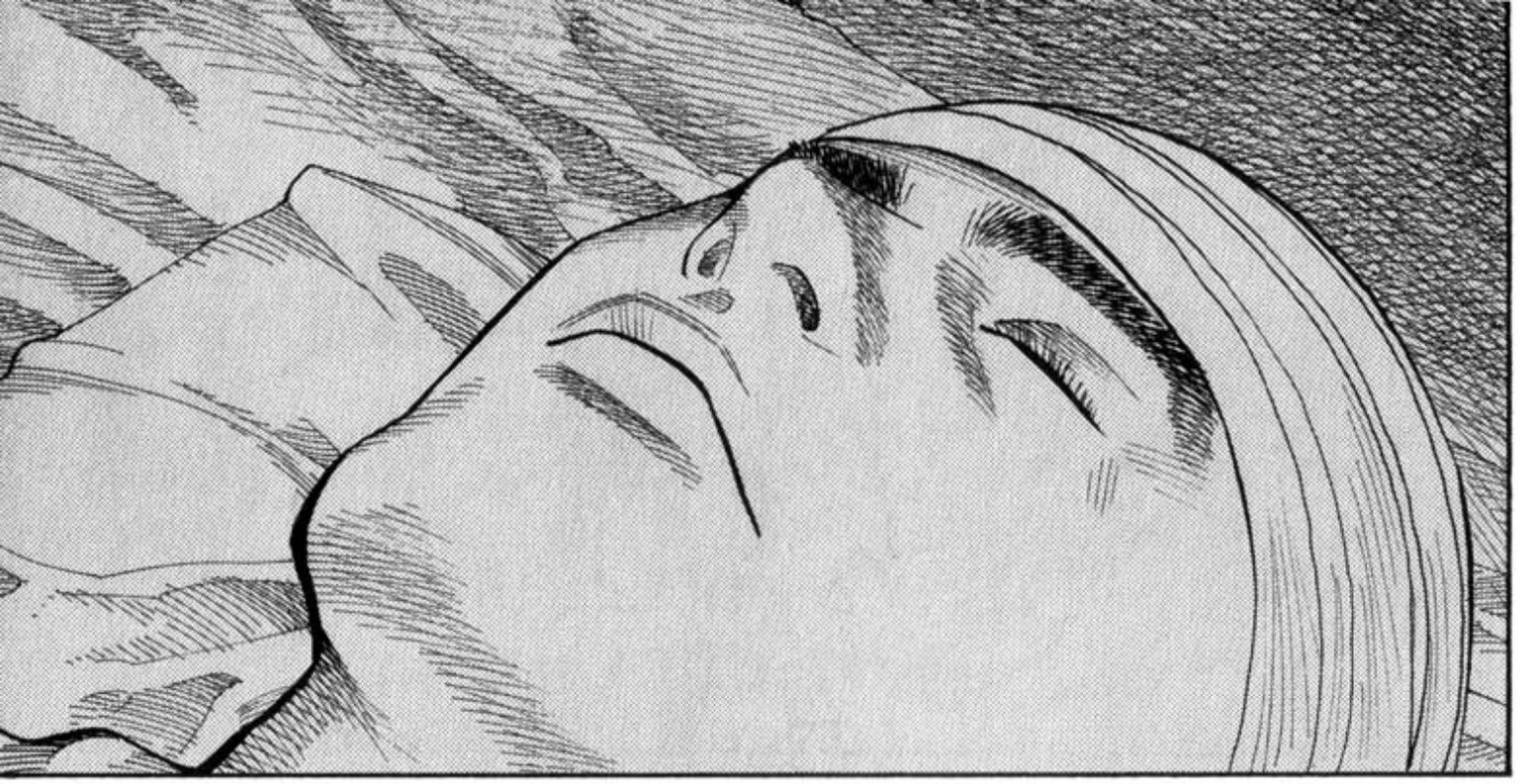
"IN A MATTER OF YEARS YOU WILL BECOME AN EXTRAORDINARY FIGHTER."

INSHUN...


THAT VOICE I HEARD...
...WAS THAT MY IMAGINA-TION?
"I WANT TO LIVE."
"I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO SEEING YOU THEN."

IT WAS REAL.
NO, IT WAS REAL.

INSHUN, THE SECOND GENERATION MASTER OF THE HOZOIN TOLD ME...
...I'LL BE AN EXTRAORDINARY FIGHTER IN A FEW YEARS...



.....

"YOU SHALL DIE SOON..."

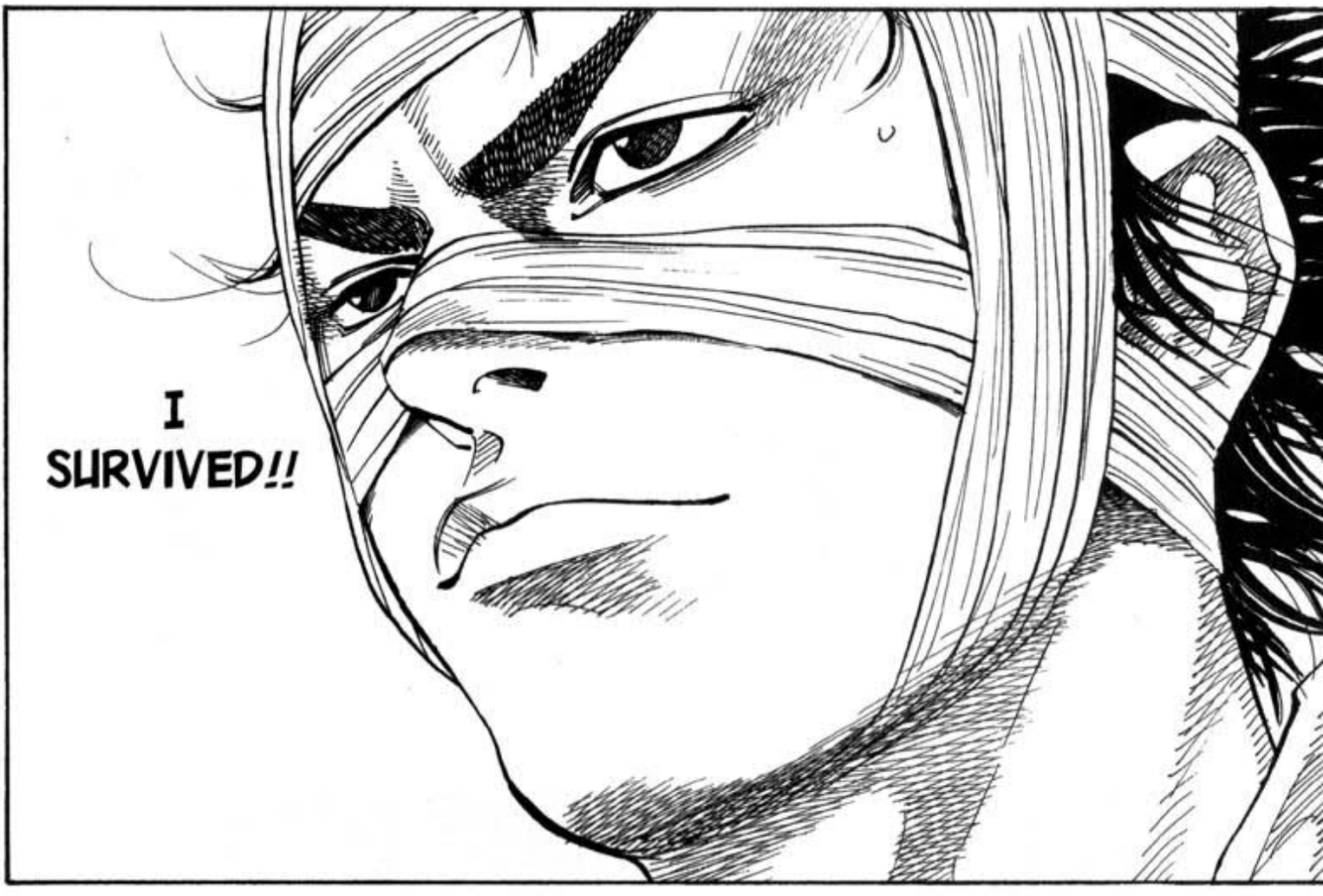
.....

ZZZ
ZZZ

HE'S ALIVE...
PHEW

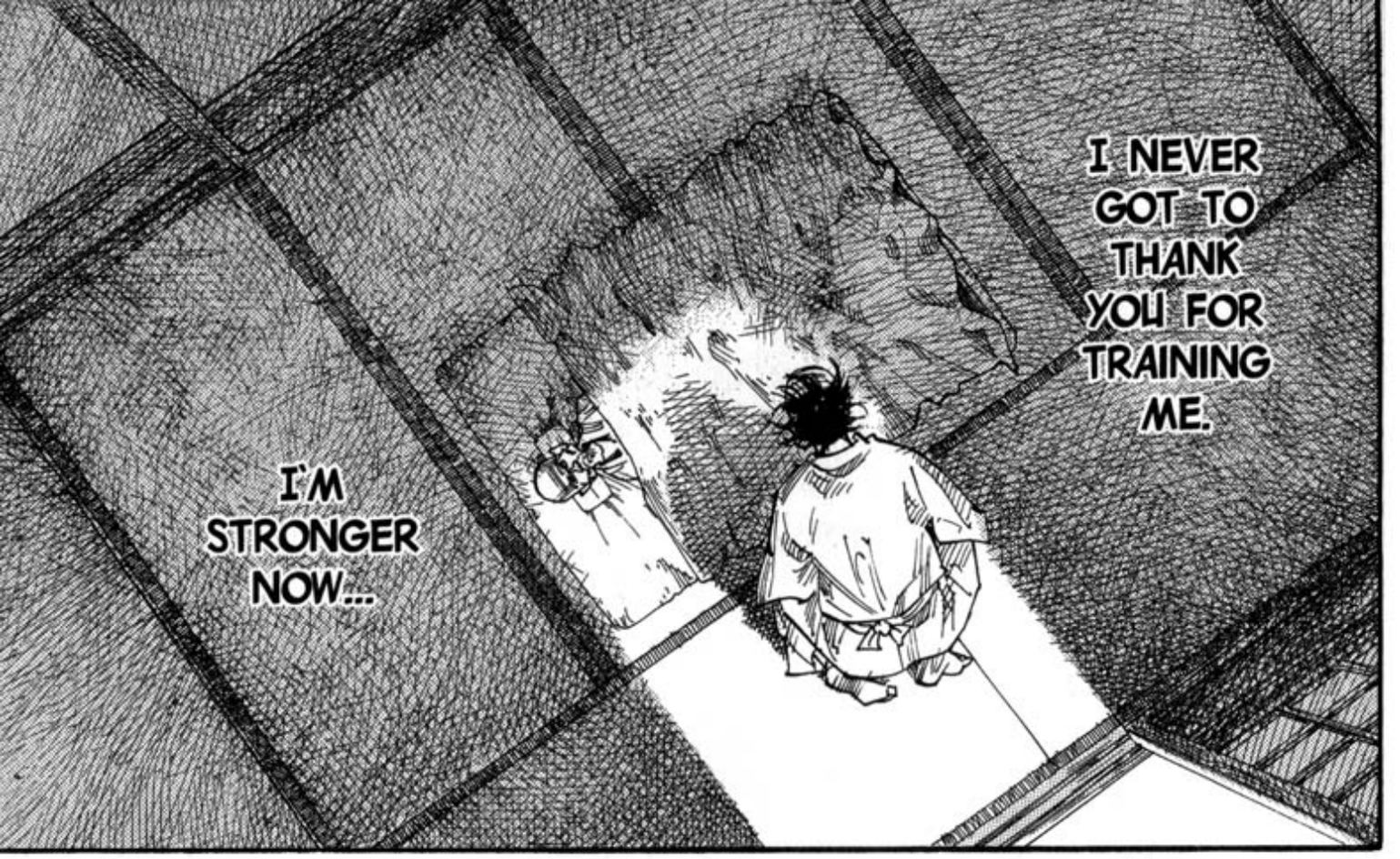
I
SURVIVED.

I
DID *NOT*
DIE...


I
SURVIVED!!

OLD MAN!

PLEASE, NO...
NO... YOU CAN'T BE--


I NEVER GOT TO THANK YOU FOR TRAINING ME.
I'M STRONGER NOW...

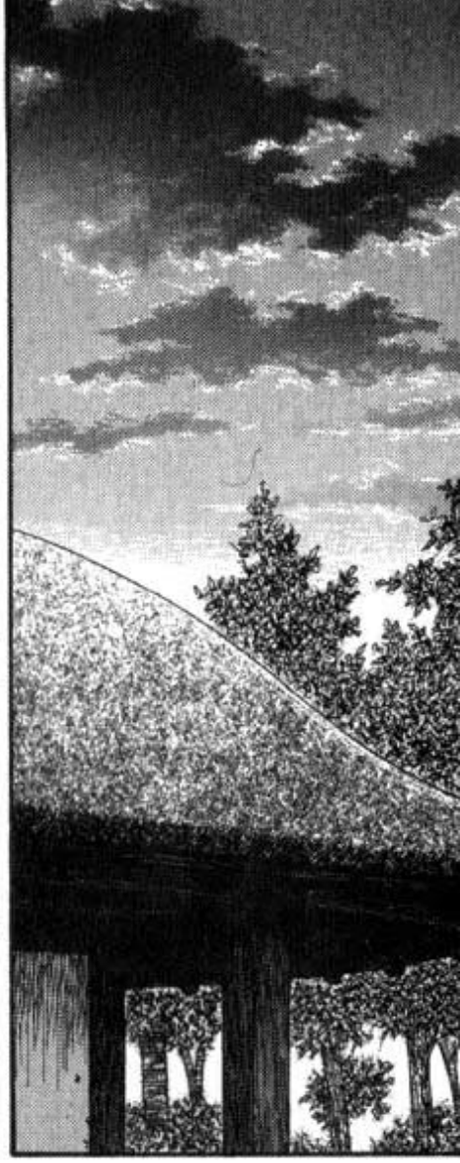
...AREN'T I?

AGON...
THERE'S A BEAST IN MY ROOM.

TUNK

!!
GASP!

PLISSH



HE'S NEVER BEEN SICK UNTIL NOW...
THE RAIN AND COLD MUST HAVE BEEN TOO MUCH FOR HIM...
WEEZ
WEEZ

HEH HEH...
I'M NOT A BEAST.

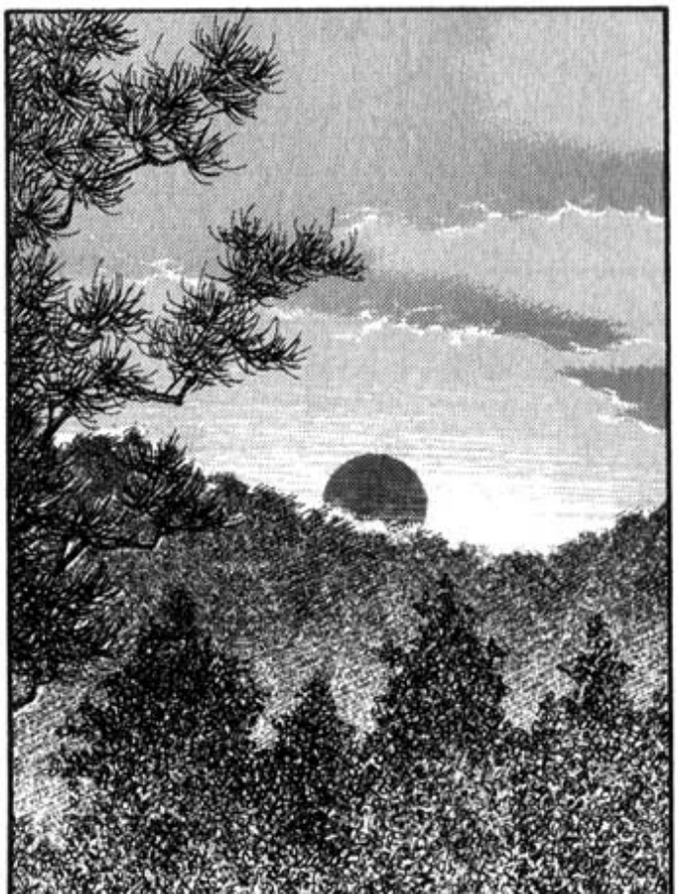
HEH HEH HEH
THE MOMENT YOU STRUCK INSHUN...
YOU REVERTED BACK TO THE BEAST YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN.

THWAK
YAHH!
THWAK
YAHH!
SHUF
I AM STRONG!!
YAHH!
YAH!

THAT GRACELESS BLOODTHIRST.
.....
YOU WERE EXACTLY THE SAME AS WHEN YOU FIRST CAME HERE.

?
YES, SIR.
AGON, GET HIM THOSE THINGS.
SIR, YOU SHOULD REST...
YOUR FEVER WILL GET WORSE.

I ASSUME YOU'LL BE CONTINUING YOUR TRAVELS...
!!!



BUT NOW...

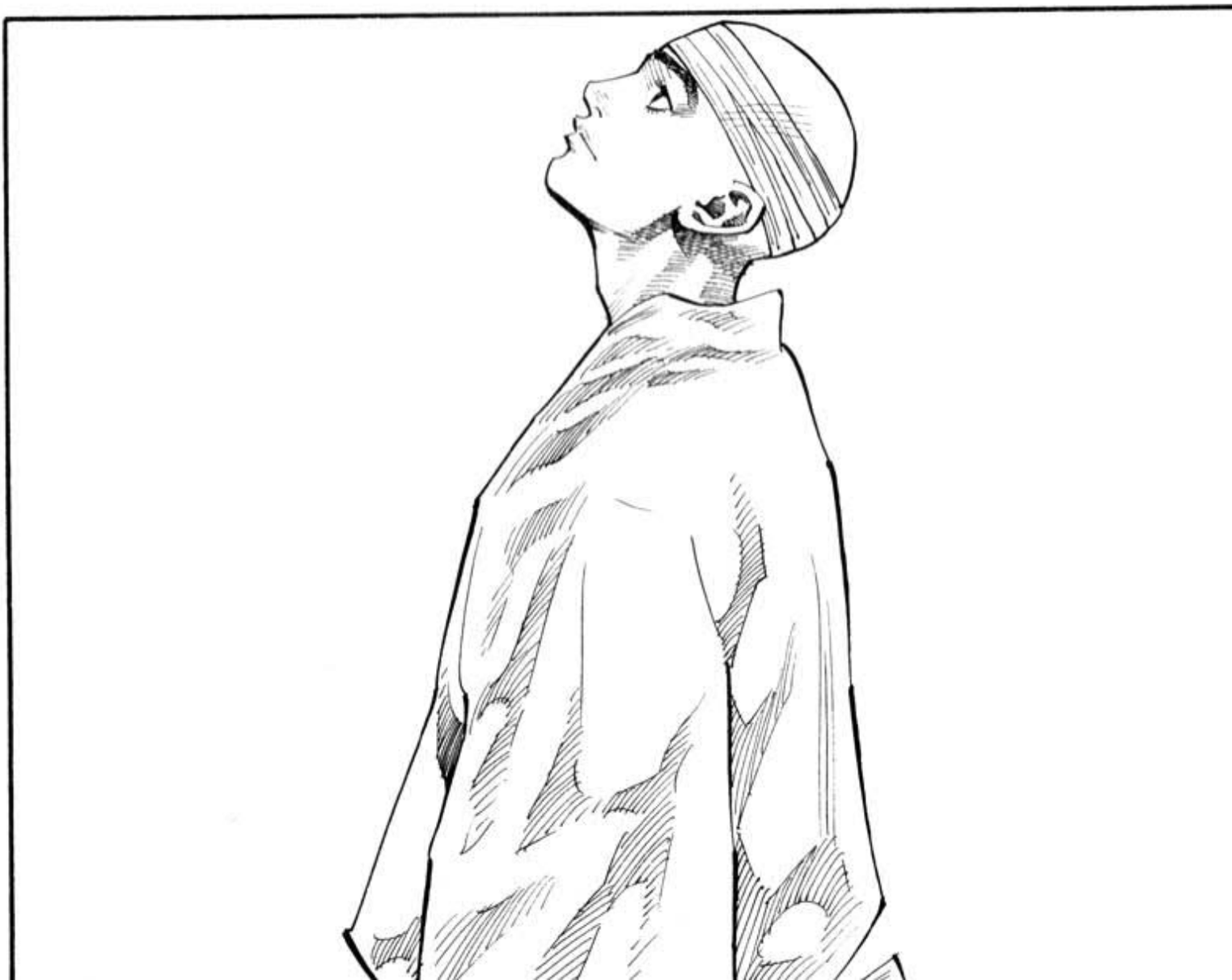
AT LEAST YOU CAN *LOOK* A BIT MORE CIVILIZED.

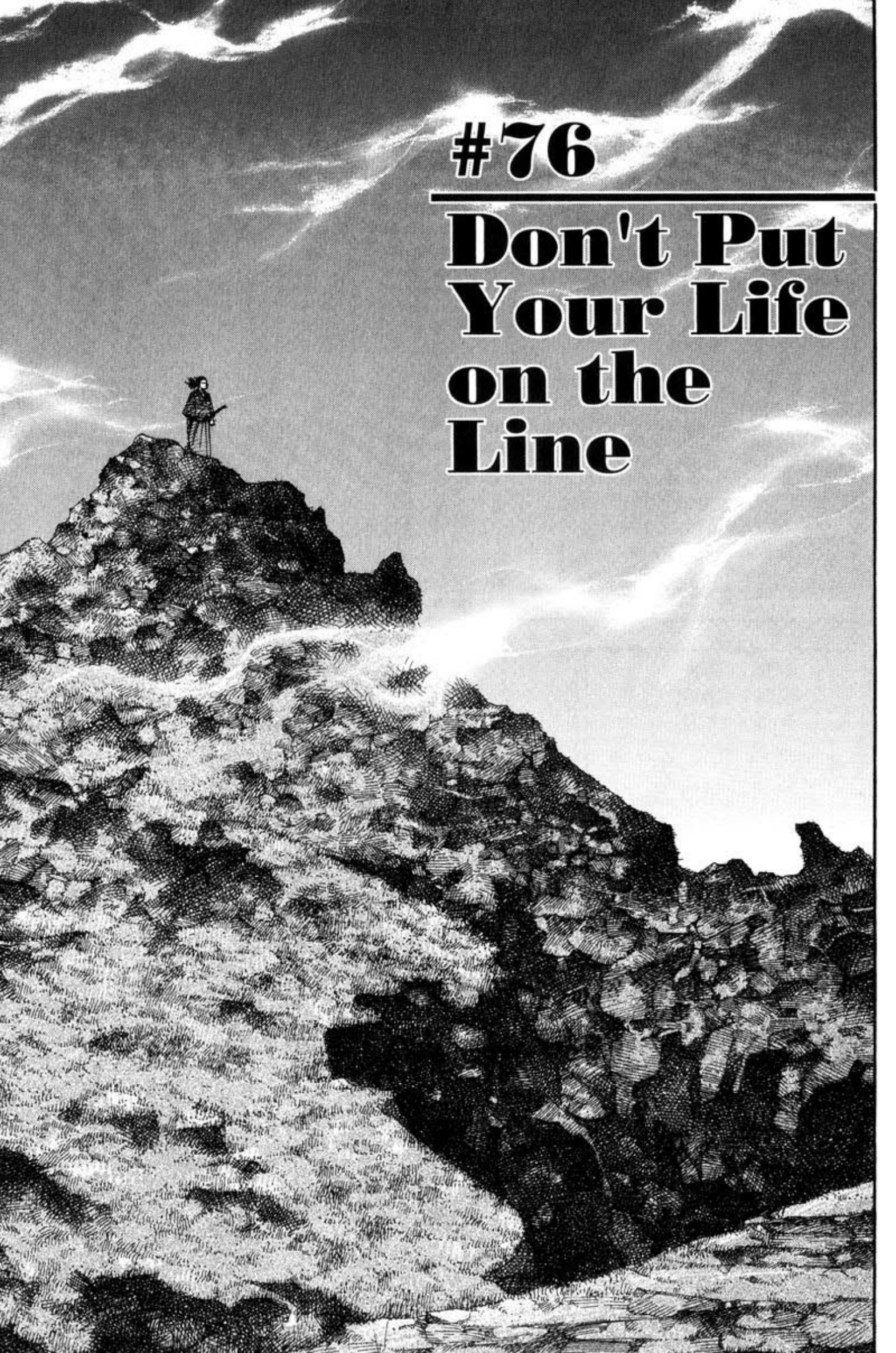
YOU DID VERY WELL UNTIL THAT FIRST BLOW...
...MUSASHI...

...!

NOW THEN, I NEED TO REST...
HUF
HUF
HUF
HMM...
HUF
...HASN'T INSHUN GAINED CONSCIOUSNESS YET...?

INSHUN...




#76
Don't Put Your Life on the Line

MASTER IN'EI!!
YOU SHOULD BE RESTING!!
NONSENSE...

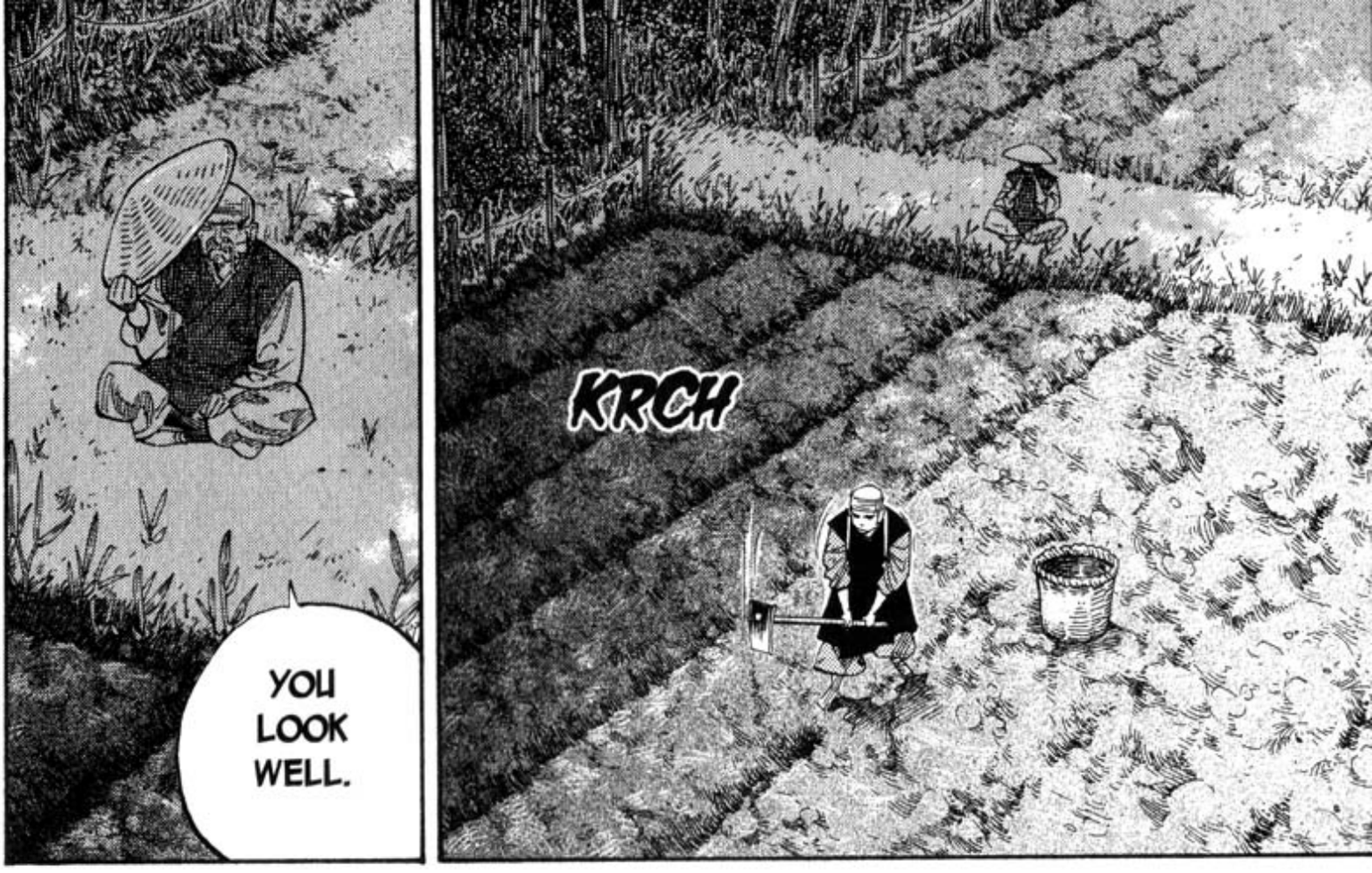
KRICH
KRICH

ALL I NEEDED WAS A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP.
TP
BUT, SIR...
AGON...
TP

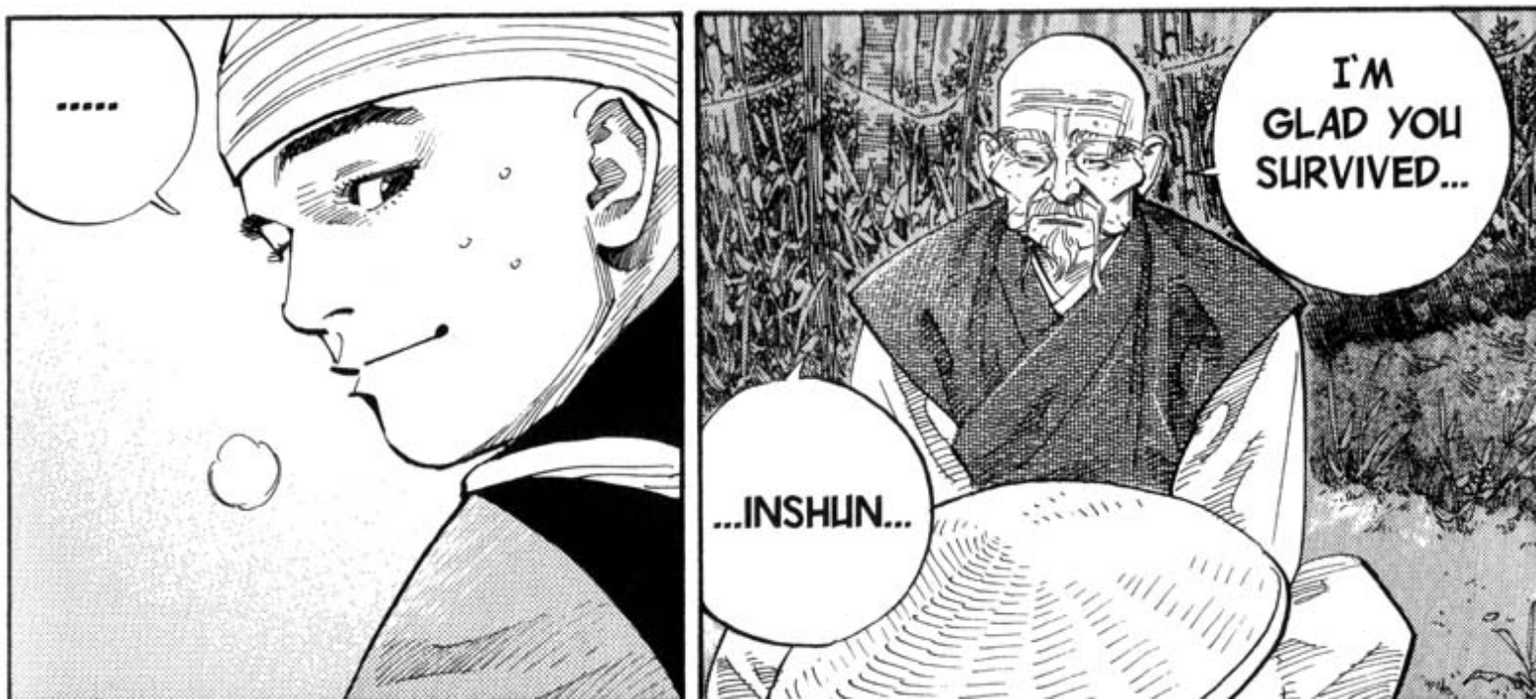
SILENCE IS GOLDEN.
TP
TP
YOU TALK TOO MUCH...

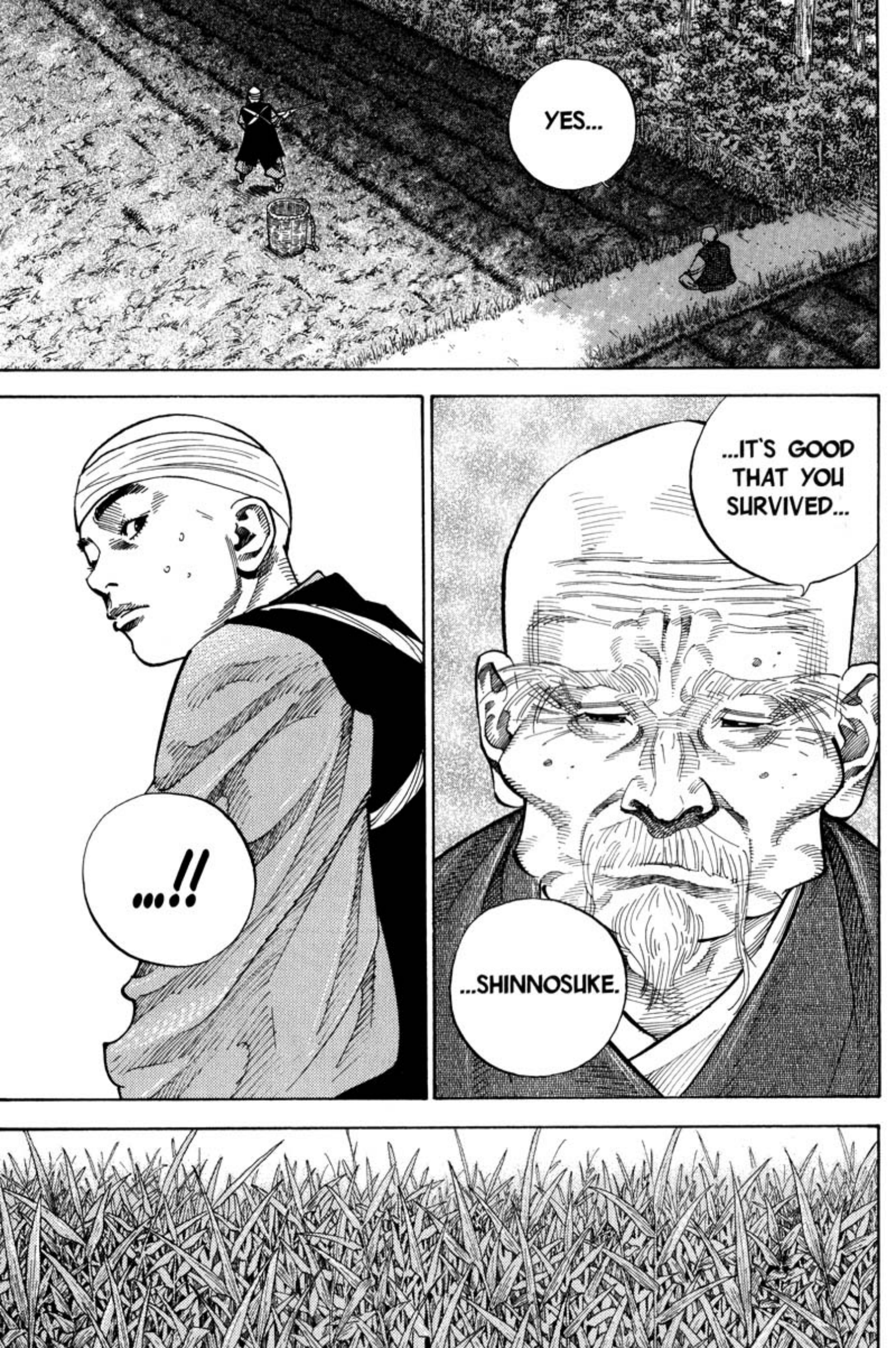
HE'LL LAST ANOTHER 20 YEARS ...
HMM...
.....

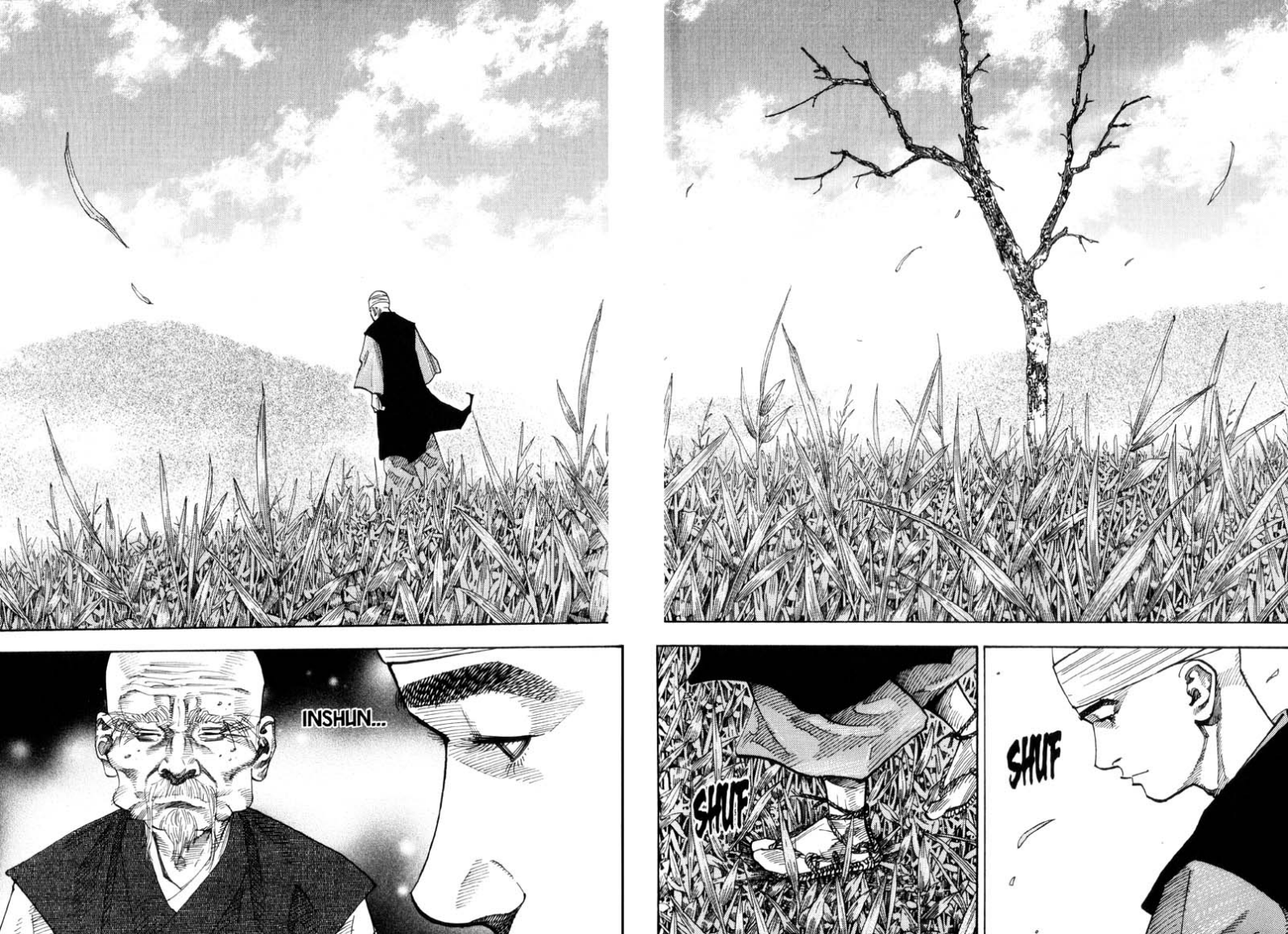
KRICH
KRICH
WELL, DON'T JUST STAND THERE. GIVE ME A HAND.
YOU'RE FEELING BETTER?


YOU LOOK WELL.
KRCH

KRCH
KRCH


.....
I'M GLAD YOU SURVIVED...
...INSHUN...


YES...
...!!
...IT'S GOOD THAT YOU SURVIVED...
...SHINNOSUKE.


INSHUN...
SHUF
SHUF

YOU
ARE NOT
ALONE.

THANK YOU FOR ALL YOU'VE DONE...
...OLD MAN!
SO DON'T GO ON ABOUT SOMETHING YOU CAN'T DO...
HMPH!
...AND IT STILL PROBABLY WOULDN'T BE ENOUGH TIME...
HRMPH! I'VE GOT AN ITCH...
SKRCH
SKRCH
I PROMISE TO REPAY YOU FOR ALL--
HUH?
DAMN YOU, OLD MAN...
...SO MANY OTHERS...
...YOUR PARENTS...
...THE GODS...
YOU COULD SPEND THE REST OF YOUR LIFE TRYING TO RETURN ALL THE FAVORS YOU OWE PEOPLE...

SHAKE
SHAKE
WHAT'S THIS?
HŌZŌIN PICKLES.
HERE! TAKE THIS.
SMIRK
MY SPECIALTY.
SHUF
!!!!

FWOOSH
FWOOSH
KRICH

SHUF

SHUF
SHUF

KRICH
SHUF

MUSASHI.

LET'S MEET AGAIN.
NEXT TIME...

KRICH

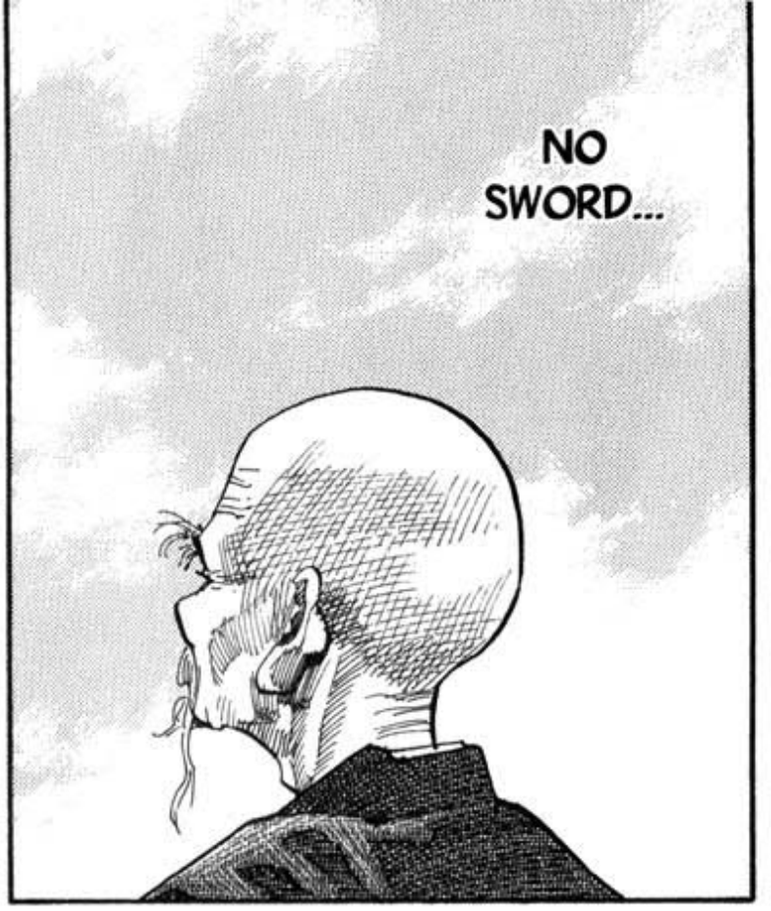
...LET'S TRY *NOT* TO KILL EACH OTHER.

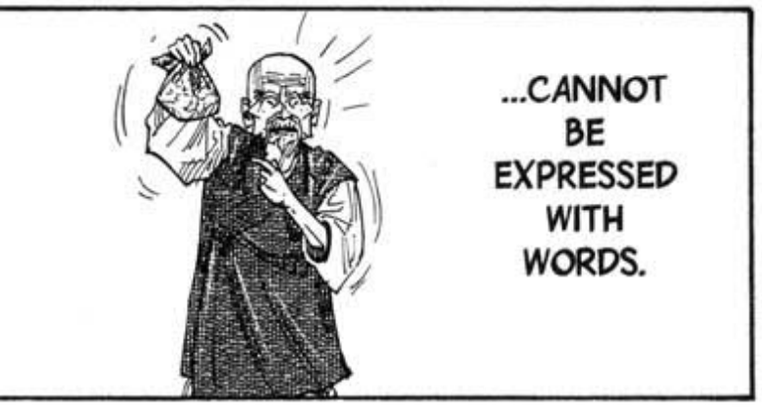
HMPH!

SIR...
I NO LONGER NEED THIS.

!

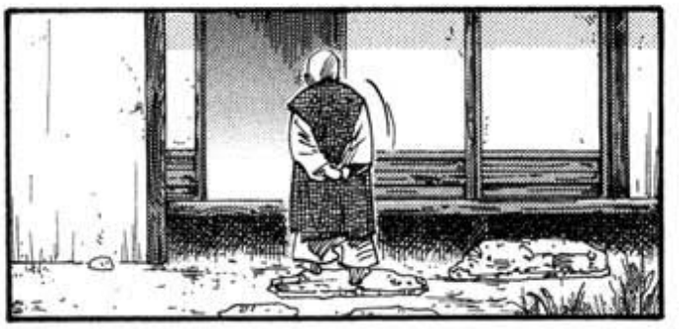
SO MANY THINGS IN THIS WORLD...


NO SWORD...


...CANNOT BE EXPRESSED WITH WORDS.

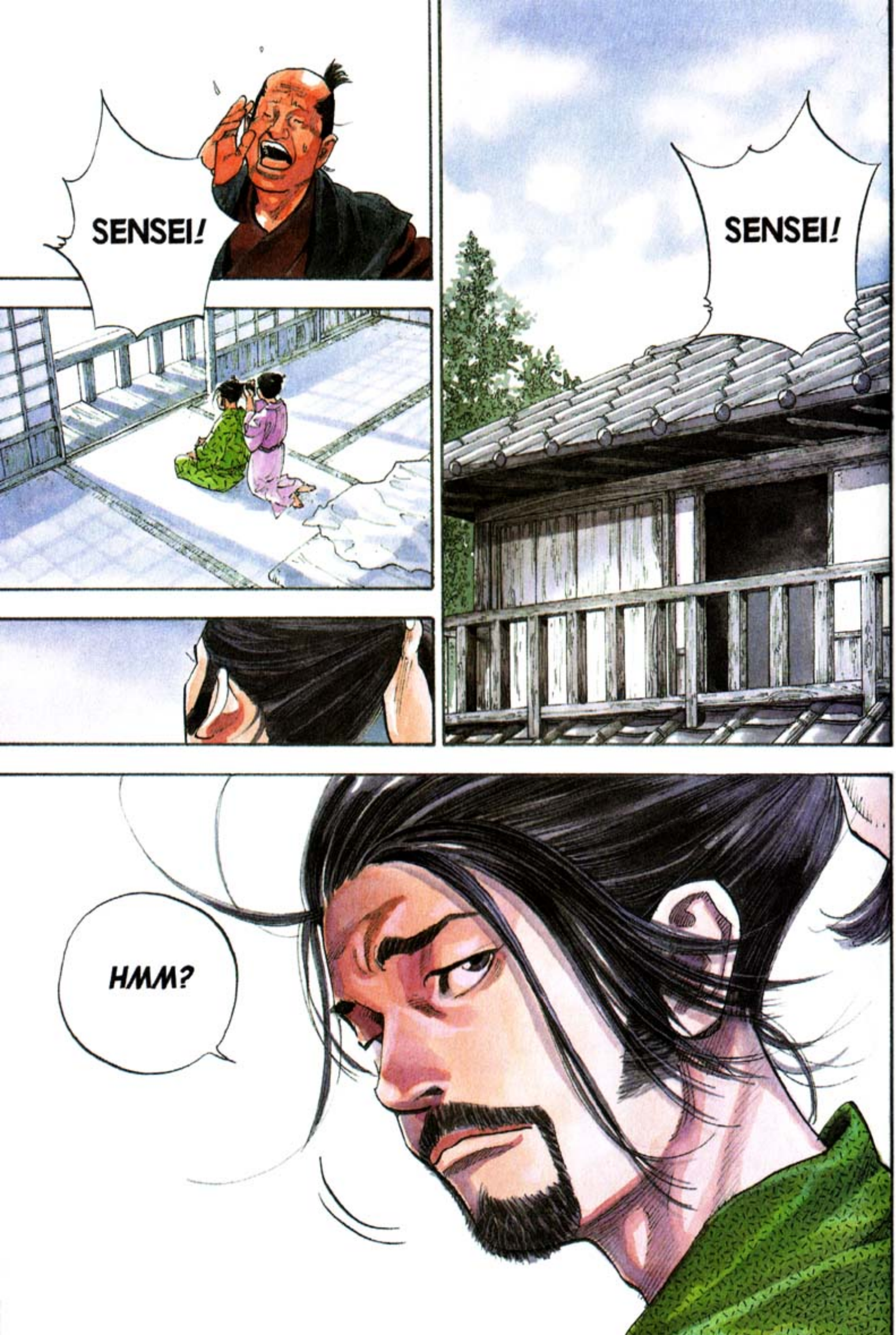
THEY MUST BE EXPERIENCED...
SOME THINGS CAN *NOT* BE EXPLAINED.

SPLENDID...



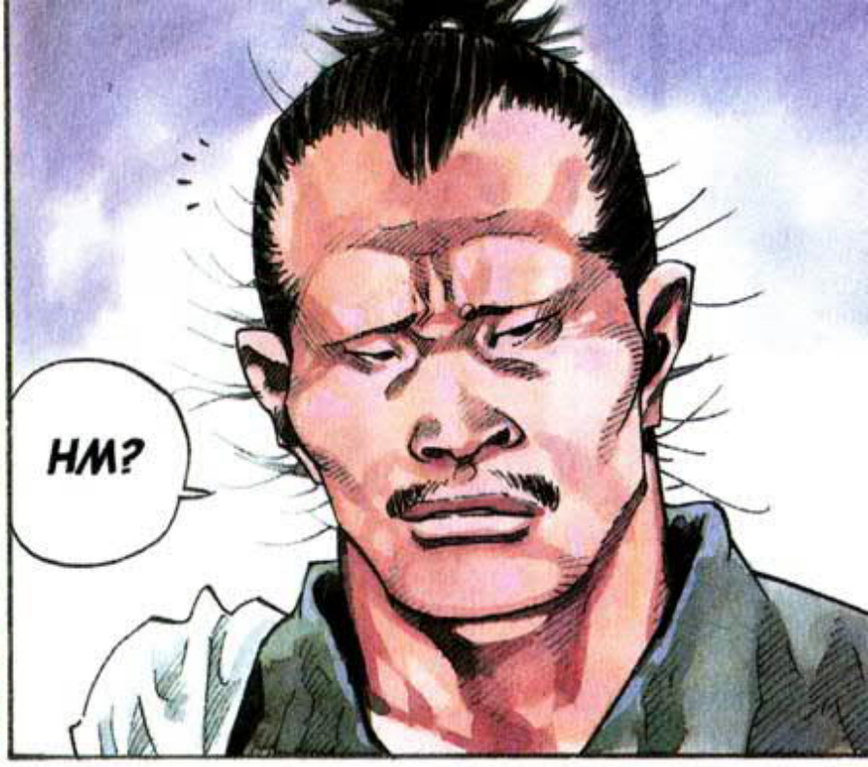
I AM INSHUN...
...THE SECOND GENERATION MASTER OF HŌZŌIN!

NOW THEN...
...HOW FAR IS IT TO THE YAGYŪ?
SHUF
LEAD THE WAY, KID!
...!!
SHUF
SHUF


SENSEI!
SENSEI!
HMM?

#77
They Call Me Sensei

SO WHAT!?
THIS MAN REFUSES TO PAY FOR HIS LODGING!


HM?

THAT JUST WON'T DO...

WHO THE HELL ARE YOU!? YOU BASTARD!!

KOJIRŌ...
HM?

SASAKI KOJIRŌ.

THIS MAN'S GOT QUITE A REPUTATION!!
!!
S-SASAKI... KOJIRŌ...!?
I...
...I'M SO SORRY...!!

EVERYONE FANCIES HIMSELF A SAMURAI IN TRAINING...
I HOPE YOU DON'T THINK WE'RE ALL THE SAME.
HA HA...
OF COURSE NOT!
JUST HEARING THE NAME SASAKI KOJIRŌ IS ENOUGH TO MAKE MOST PEOPLE TREMBLE WITH FEAR...
YOU MUST HAVE CUT DOWN QUITE A FEW MEN...I CAN'T EVEN IMAGINE.

FAME HAS ITS PROBLEMS, TOO.
YES.
IT'S GETTING DIFFICULT FOR ME TO FIND A WILLING OPPONENT.
HA HA!
I SEE.
NO...
ACTUALLY ...
HMM...
ZHING
MY SWORD HUNGERS FOR FRESH BLOOD...
YES...
...WHEN YOU'RE WITH US, YOU TREAT US AS EQUALS.
I SUPPOSE THERE ARE ALL KINDS OF SAMURAI.
BUT...
.....

KIKU...
IF ONLY THEY WERE ALL LIKE YOU, KOJIRŌ...

UNH...

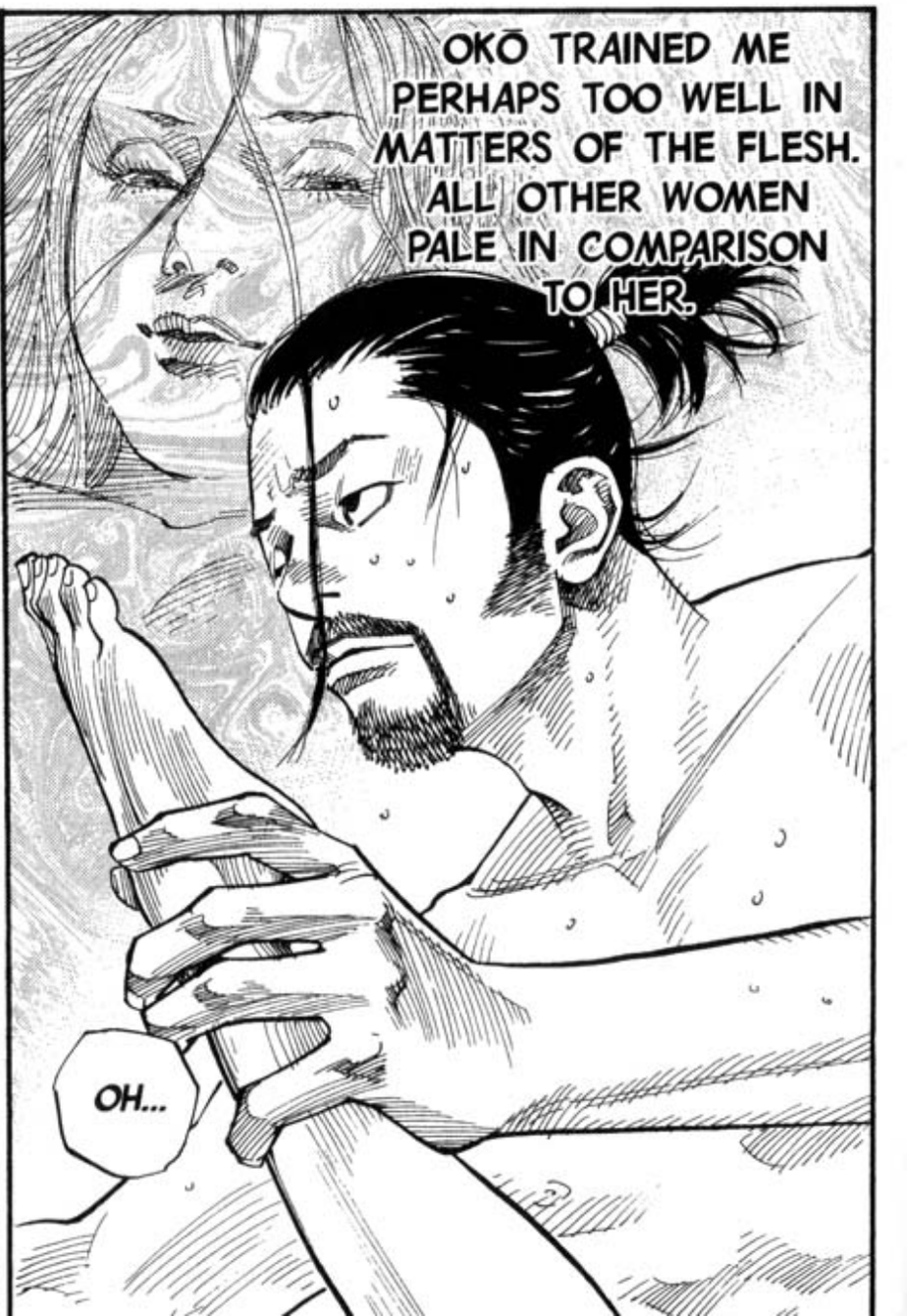
OH, KOJIRŌ...

AH...
UNH ...

KIKU SEEMS TO HAVE FALLEN FOR ME.
AH...
BUT...
UNH ...

I'M GOING OUT FOR A DRINK.

.....


OKŌ TRAINED ME PERHAPS TOO WELL IN MATTERS OF THE FLESH. ALL OTHER WOMEN PALE IN COMPARISON TO HER.
OH...

S-SASAKI SENSEI!
GASP!
ULP!

GOOD EVENING ...
SHUF
...SIR...
SHUF

SHUF
SHUF

HM?

HERE'S THE GUY!!
FOOL! BE POLITE!
YOU AGAIN?
.....
HMPH!
PARDON THE INTRUSION...
...SASAKI KOJIRŌ...
FSH

ASCENDING DRAGONS?
I HAVE DEDICATED THE PAST 35 YEARS TO THE WAY OF THE SWORD.
I AM KAI SHŌJIRŌ...
WE SHALL SEE WHETHER I'M THE EQUAL OF THESE ASCENDING DRAGONS--THIS RECENT WAVE OF TALENTED YOUNG FIGHTERS.
I REQUEST A MATCH!!

YOU ARE INDEED YOUNG!
...BUT NOT AS BIG AS THEY SAY...
GULP...
I DON'T WANT TO CAUSE A DISTURBANCE.
LET'S GO ELSEWHERE.
YES.
I HEAR THAT YOU CALL YOUR STYLE, "GANRYŪ."
IT'S QUITE AN ACHIEVEMENT TO DEVELOP YOUR OWN STYLE AT SUCH A YOUNG AGE.
"GANRYŪ ...?"

WHAT'S THAT...?

IN ANY CASE...
THIS GUY...
HE SEEMS DIFFERENT FROM ALL THOSE OTHER PUNKS...

OH, IT'S JUST MY SANDAL...

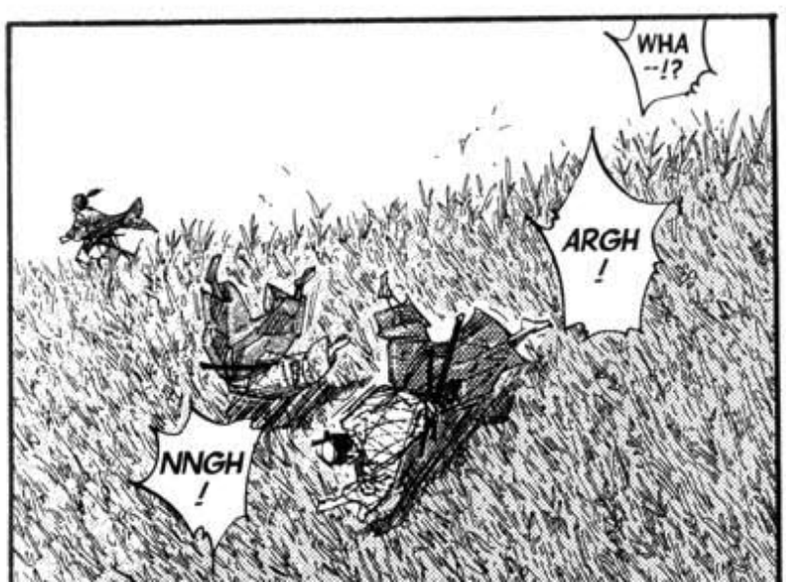
HM?
SOME-THING WRONG?

HE'S NOTHING LIKE AKAKABE YASOMA.

THMP THMP
THMP THMP

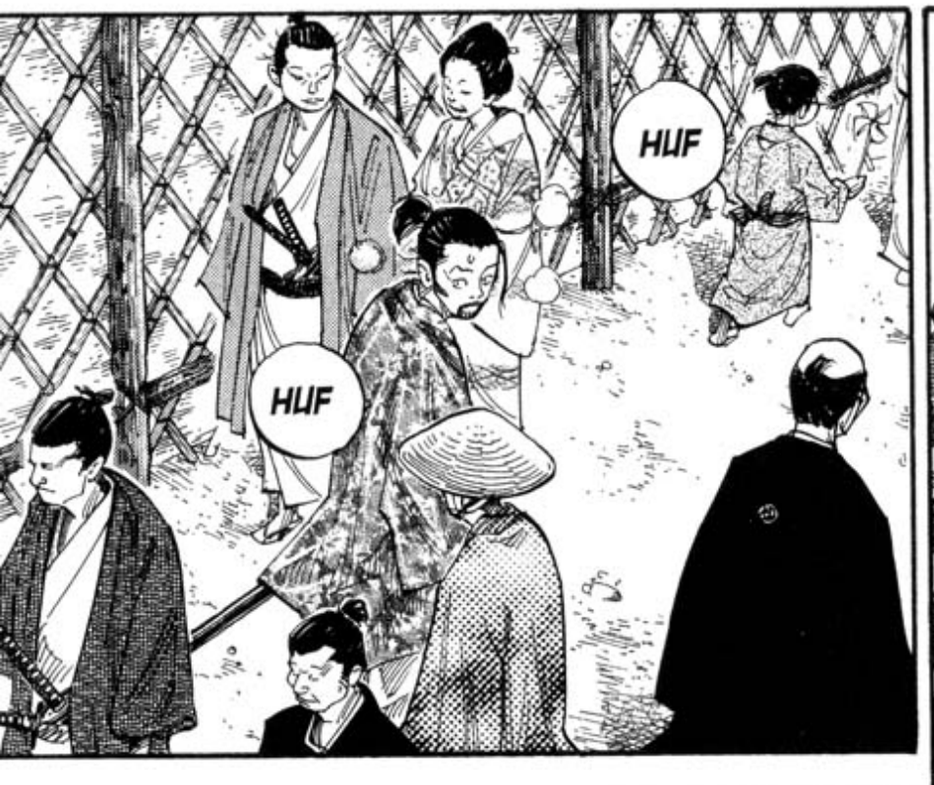
!

THUMP
ARGH!!


WHA --!?
ARGH !
NNGH !

!!

HUF
HUF
HUF


HUF
HUF

...

A GENUINE TIGER!!
MMBL
IT COMES FROM A FAR OFF LAND!
A GREAT TIGER FROM KOREA!!
MMBL
MMBL
THE GREAT LORD KATŌ KIYOMOSA CAPTURED THIS TIGER HIMSELF!
.....
HUF
HUF
BUT IT'S DEAD.
THIS IS A TIGER HIDE.
I WANT MY MONEY BACK!
WHAT'S THE POINT IN LOOKING AT A DEAD TIGER!?
HEY, I WANT MY MONEY BACK!
STOP IT, GRANNY! YOU'RE MAKING A SPECTACLE OF YOURSELF!!
YOU TRICKED ME!!

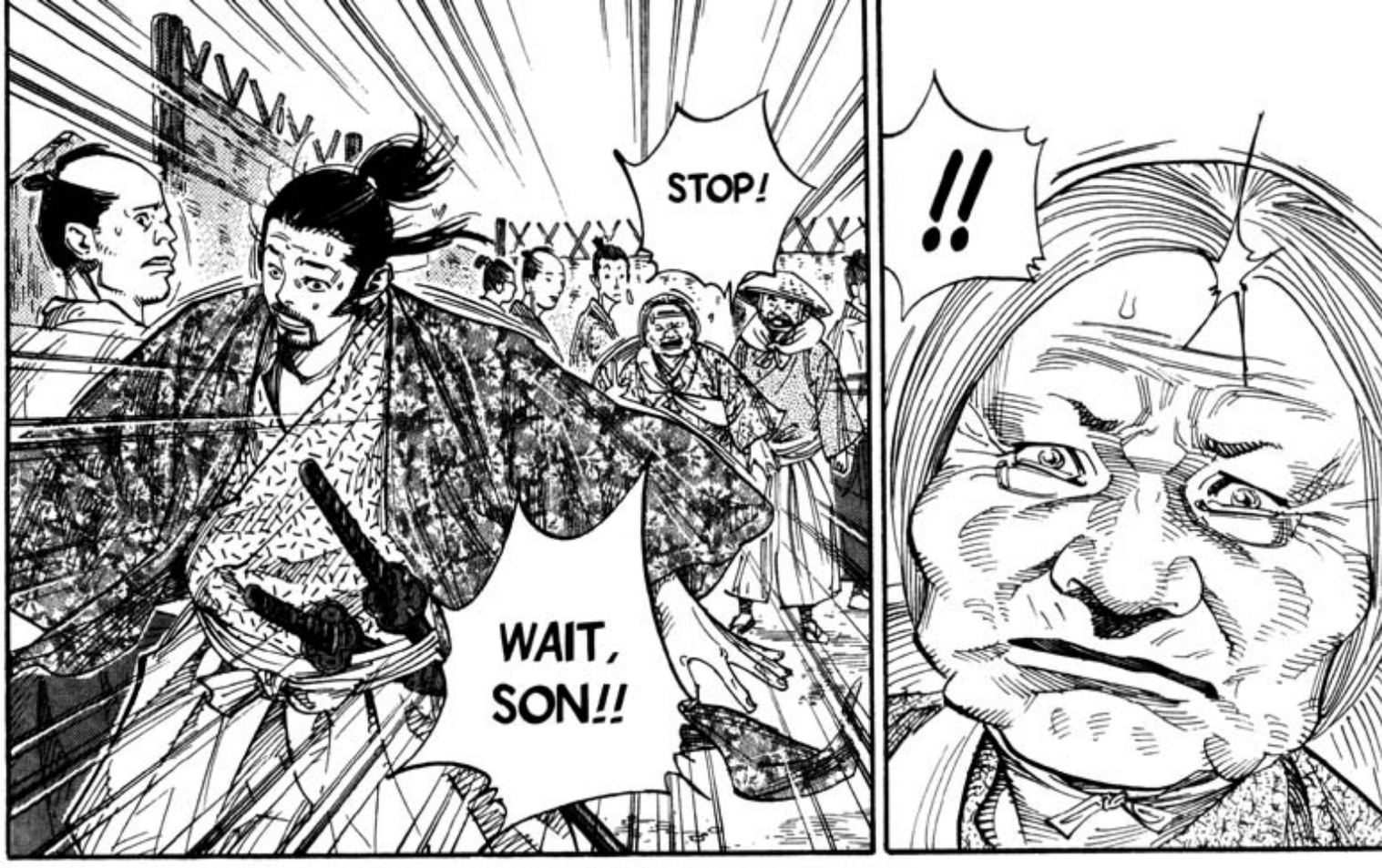
HUH!?

PARDON.
OH, NO... PARDON ME!

FICH

MATAHACHI!!!

#78
Ascending Dragon


STOP!
WAIT, SON!!
!!

MATA-HACHI!!
WHY ARE YOU RUNNING AWAY!?
YOU FOOL!!

THIEF!
STOP, THIEF!!
HUF
HUF
.....

CATCH THAT THIEF!
WE GOT HIM!
YOU'RE A THIEF, HUH!?
!!
WHACK
SHOVE
SHOVE
YAHHH!
I SAID, STOP IT!
YOU BASTARD !!
YOU'RE A DEAD MAN.
DAMN YOU!
HEY! STOP IT!!
HMPH!
YOU CRUEL BASTARDS!

I YELLED OUT, BUT I DIDN'T ASK YOU TO STOMP ON HIM!
YOU HAD NO RIGHT TO DO THAT, YOU LOWLY MERCHANTS!!
NOW, GO AWAY!!

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? HE'S A THIEF!
NO, HE'S NOT! HOW DARE YOU!?
YOU LOWLY MERCHANTS HAVE NO RIGHT TO KICK AROUND THE SON OF A SAMURAI.

YOU'RE THE ONE WHO SAID HE WAS A THIEF!
HMPH!
YES, I DID.

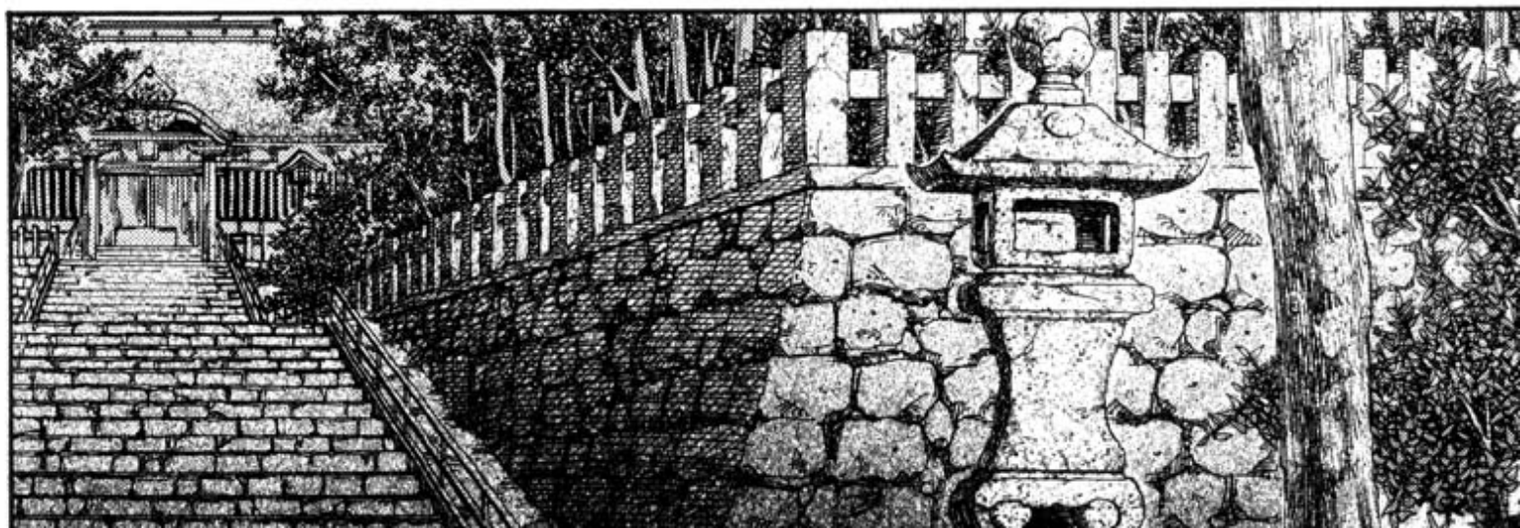
WHAT!? YOU OLD--!!
FORGET ABOUT IT. SHE'S OUT OF HER MIND.

HMPH!

THAT'S ENOUGH. MATAHACHI'S NOT A KID ANYMORE.
GRANNY!
FWAK
FWAK
FWAK
FWAK
FWAK
YOU THINK YOU DROPPED OUT OF THE SKY!?
SHUT UP, GON!!
HOW DARE YOU RUN AWAY FROM YOUR OWN MOTHER!?
YOU'RE MY SON!!
BUT YOU'RE LIVING OUT HERE IN OSAKA...
IT'S BEEN FIVE YEARS SINCE YOU WERE TRICKED BY THAT BASTARD MUSASHI TO GO OUT AND FIGHT...I THOUGHT YOU WERE DEAD.
WHY DIDN'T YOU COME HOME!?
WHY ARE YOU HIDING FROM YOUR RELATIVES?
LOOK... MOTHER...

I WAS TOO ASHAMED...
...TO RETURN.
WHY DIDN'T YOU COME AND SEE...
...YOUR VERY OWN MOTHER?
WHAT DID YOU DO AFTER SEKIGAHARA ...
...THAT WAS SO SHAMEFUL ?

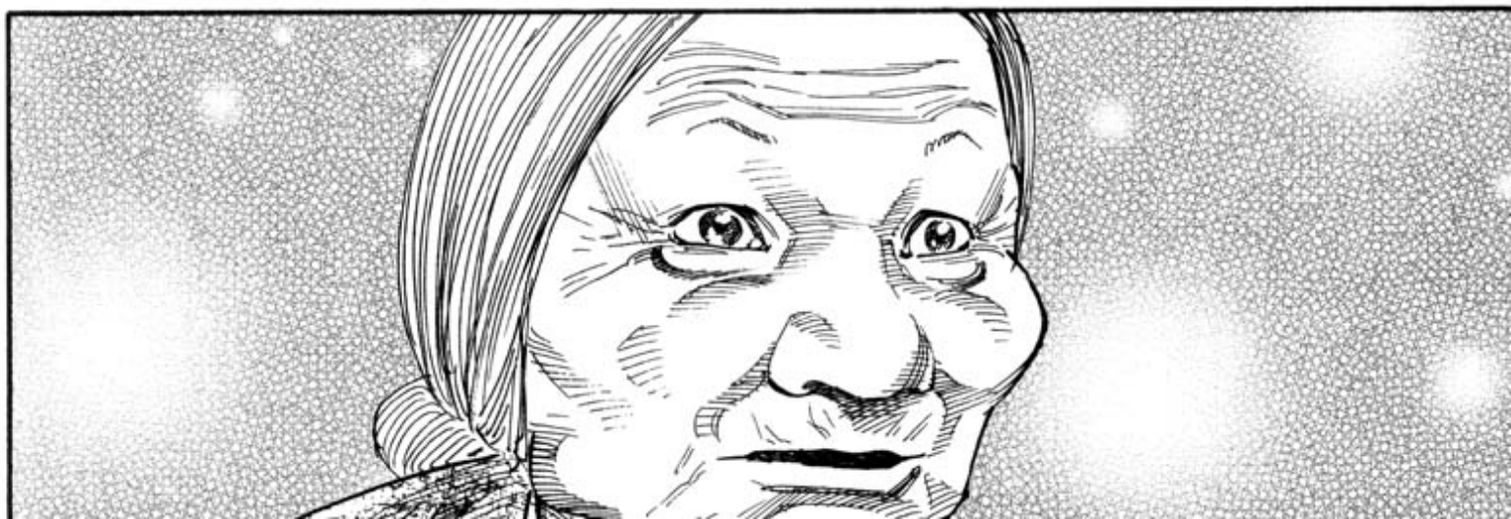
TELL ME...



YOU'VE RUINED OUR FAMILY'S REPUTATION ...
THAT'S IT.
HMM...
A LIFE OF WOMEN AND ALCOHOL...
AND THEN YOU END UP BEING A FUGITIVE FROM KYOTO...
.....
I'M TRULY SORRY...
WHAT ARE YOU DOING NOW?
HAVE YOU BEEN GIVEN AN OFFICIAL POSITION?
YOU'RE WEARING SUCH NICE CLOTHES...
...BUT WHAT'S WITH THAT HAIR?
YES...
BY THE SWORD ?
I LIVE BY THE SWORD.
I MEAN, NO!
I HAVEN'T.

THE WAY OF THE SWORD...
...IT TOOK ME A WHILE...
...BUT I'VE FINALLY DISCOVERED THE TRUTH...
HMM...
I GIVE LESSONS...
...IN SWORD FIGHTING AND SUCH.

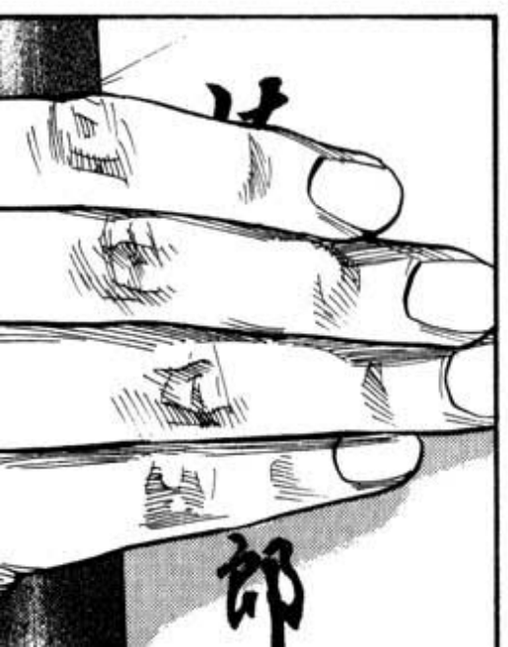
ALL I HAVE IS THE WAY OF THE SWORD!!



HOW ADMIRABLE!! EH, GON!?
YES. HE MIGHT HAVE BEEN A FUGITIVE.
BUT THE BLOOD OF THE HON'IDEN FAMILY RUNS THROUGH HIM, ALL RIGHT.

REALLY !?
HA HA!!
WELL!!
A SWORDS-MAN!!

FLIP
LOOK AT THIS!
印可
一中条流大刀之
一表
電光、車、円流
一裏
金剛、亨上、無
七剣
文之上
伝授受之



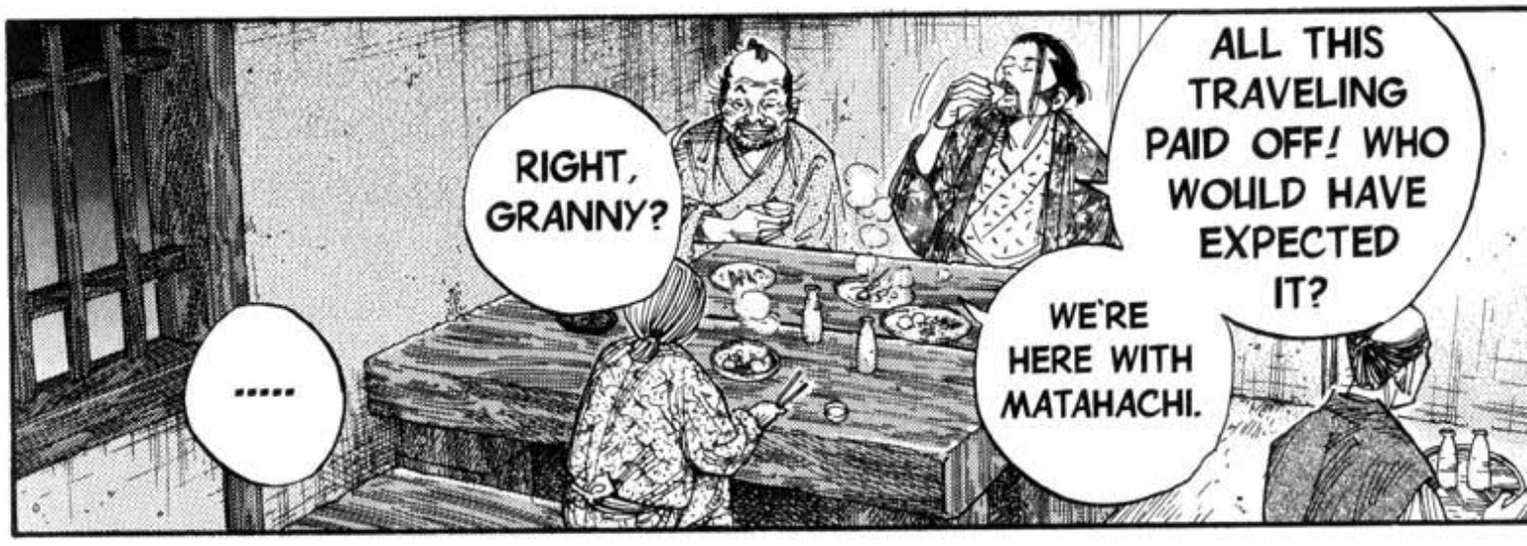
!!
IT'S A...
...A SWORDS-MAN'S CERTIFI-CATE...!!

I...
I ALWAYS THOUGHT YOU WERE A BETTER MAN THAN THAT TAKEZŌ...
BRR
BRR
AND I WAS RIGHT.
BRR
BRR
BRR
BRR
BRR
I KNOW YOU WERE WORRIED SICK OVER ME.
BUT YOU CAN REST EASY NOW, MOTHER.

LET ME HAVE A CLOSER LOOK.
GRAB
WAIT!
HM?

PSEUDONYM ?
WHY USE A PSEUDONYM ?
YOU HAVE A RESPECTABLE NAME, MATAHACHI HON'IDEN!!
THIS?
IT'S UH...
...MY PSEUDO-NYM.
WHY DOES IT SAY SASAKI KOJIRŌ!?
ANSWER ME, BOY!
HUH?
BECAUSE OF MY SHAMEFUL PAST...
...I DIDN'T WANT TO TARNISH OUR ANCESTORS' REPUTATION...
SAY...
I'M GETTING HUNGRY.
LET'S GO HAVE SOME LUNCH!
I SEE...
HMM...
.....

THE LONG AWAITED REUNION!
CHEERS!


ALL THIS TRAVELING PAID OFF! WHO WOULD HAVE EXPECTED IT?
WE'RE HERE WITH MATAHACHI.
RIGHT, GRANNY?
.....

HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN WE'RE OUT FOR REVENGE!?
WE'RE LOOKING FOR TAKEZŌ AND OTSŪ!!

HMM...
WE'RE OUT OF SAKÉ.

ENOUGH, GON!!
MORE SAKÉ!!
HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN WHY WE'RE HERE?

!!
YOU'RE OBLIVIOUS ABOUT THE VILLAGE, MATAHACHI.
DON'T YOU WANT TO KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENED TO OTSŪ?
SORRY...
WHAT'S THIS ABOUT...?
...TAKEZŌ AND OTSŪ?
OTSŪ!!
WHAT'S BECOME OF HER!?
IF SHE'S STILL WAITING FOR ME, I'LL RETURN TO MIYAMOTO VILLAGE IMMEDIATELY!!
IF SHE'S...

SHE LEFT THE VILLAGE...
...WITH TAKEZŌ.

!

OTSU...
...WITH TAKEZŌ...!?

ACTUALLY, HE'S CALLING HIMSELF MIYAMOTO MUSASHI NOW.
HMPH!
IT'S OBVIOUS.
SHE GAVE UP ON YOU SINCE YOU DIDN'T COME HOME. NOW SHE'S WITH TAKEZŌ.
WAIT... WHAT DO YOU MEAN...?
BUT OTSŪ HELPED HIM ESCAPE.
TAKUAN HAD HIM HANGING FROM THE OLD CEDAR TREE AT SHIPPŌJI TEMPLE. HE SHOULD HAVE DIED...
.....
SHE DISAPPEARED FROM THE VILLAGE THAT VERY SAME DAY.
SHE SPIT ON THE HON'IDEN FAMILY DESPITE ALL WE'VE DONE FOR HER!
WE CAN'T GO HOME UNTIL WE MAKE THOSE TWO PAY!
THAT'S WHY WE ARE TRAVELING THE COUNTRY.
YOU SEE, MATA-HACHI...

DON'T BE STUPID.
THEY'RE NOT LITTLE KIDS.
THEN... TH-THOSE TWO...
THEY'RE...
...INVOLVED?

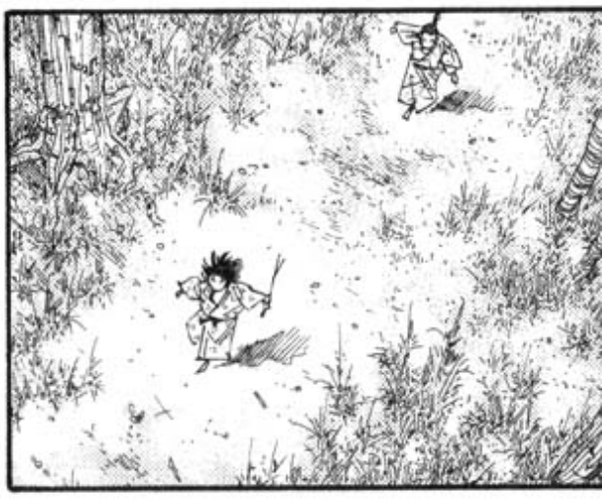
YOU SHOULD SEE THEM FOR WHAT THEY ARE.

WE ARE FROM THE SAME VILLAGE...
EXCUSE ME...
MIYAMOTO MUSASHI...
WE HEAR ABOUT HIM WHEREVER WE TRAVEL.
WE HEARD YOU MENTION MIYAMOTO MUSASHI. DO YOU KNOW HIM, BY CHANCE?
AND MOST RECENTLY, HE DEFEATED INSHUN OF HŌZŌIN TEMPLE...!!
HE FOUGHT YOSHIOKA DENSHICHIRŌ TO A DEADLOCK...
OF COURSE, THESE ARE JUST RUMORS.
INSHUN IS STILL HEAD OF HŌZŌIN, SO WE DON'T KNOW HOW TRUE THIS STORY IS.
BUT HE MUST'VE AT LEAST HELD HIS GROUND AGAINST INSHUN.
...!!

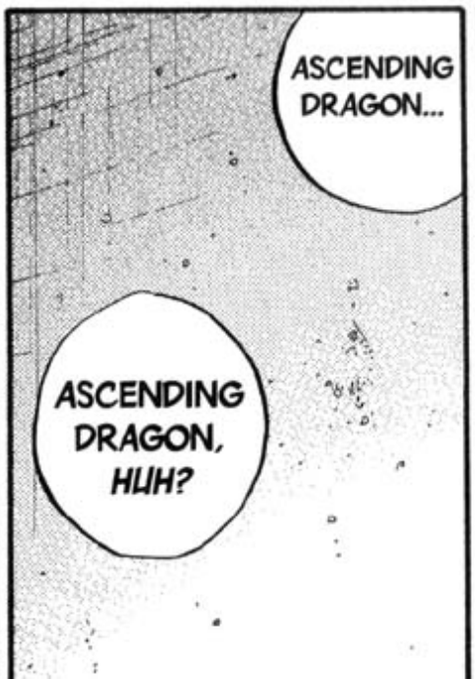
HMPH !!
WHAT !?

AMONGST THOSE OF US DEDICATED TO THE SWORD...
...HE IS THE GREATEST ASCENDING DRAGON!
THAT'S WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT MIYAMOTO MUSASHI!

I THOUGHT YOU WERE FROM THE SAME VILLAGE.
AREN'T YOU HAPPY FOR HIM?



HEY...


ASCENDING DRAGON...
ASCENDING DRAGON, HUH?

HAVE YOU HEARD OF SASAKI KOJIRŌ?

GASP!

SOME DAY...

THEY SAY HE FIGHTS LIKE A DEMON.
SASAKI KOJIRŌ...

YES, OF COURSE!!

...KOJIRŌ WILL DEFEAT MUSASHI...

About the Author

VAGABOND was created by Takehiko Inoue, author of the best selling manga *SLAM DUNK*, with over 100 million copies in print worldwide. For his work on *VAGABOND*, Inoue received the 2000 Media Arts award for Manga from the Japanese Ministry of Culture as well as the 2000 Kodansha Award for best manga. Most recently in 2002, Inoue's *VAGABOND* received the prestigious Tezuka award for best manga. To date, *VAGABOND* has sold well over 22 million copies throughout the world. In addition to his numerous manga titles, Inoue also created the character designs for the PlayStation basketball game, *ONE ON ONE*.

About *VAGABOND* and *Miyamoto Musashi*

Takehiko Inoue's *VAGABOND*, based on Eiji Yoshikawa's novel *MUSASHI*, is a fictional account of the life of Miyamoto Musashi (1584-1645). The historical figure Miyamoto Musashi, author of the philosophical strategy guide *A BOOK OF FIVE RINGS*, was a master of the sword and was revered as a "sword-saint." He founded the Niten Ichi style of sword fighting which is typified by fighting with both long and short swords at once, holding the long sword with the right hand and the short sword with the left. Musashi was also a master of the "gentler arts"—he was a master of *sumi-e* (black ink drawings), metalworking, and woodcarving. The films, *THE SAMURAI TRILOGY*, directed by Hiroshi Inagaki and starring Toshiro Mifune were also based on Yoshikawa's *MUSASHI*. Inspired by the huge success of *VAGABOND* in Japan, in 2003, NHK produced the historical period drama, *MUSASHI*. Also based on Yoshikawa's novel, this drama stars kabuki actor Shinnosuke Ichikawa as Musashi and TV star Ryoko Yonekura as Otsu.

A note on names:

The names presented within the context of this comic are presented in the traditional Japanese order—surname, followed by first name. "Miyamoto" is Miyamoto Musashi's last name and "Musashi" is his first name. The name of the creator of *VAGABOND*, however, has been presented first name first, last name second. "Takehiko" is the author's first name and "Inoue" is his last name.

Glossary and Extraneous Background Information

Hozoin Spear Technique
Created by the Buddhist monk Kakuzenbo Hoin In'ei (1521-1607) of Hozoin Temple which was a sub-temple of Kofukuji Temple in Nara. This spear technique is typified by quick dexterous movements rather than the use of brute force.

Sasaki Kojiro
The legendary archrival of Miyamoto Musashi. Kojiro is believed to have studied the Chujo-ryu style of swordsmanship under the instruction of either Toda Seigen or Kanemaki Jisai. Kojiro was renowned for his *Tsubame-gaeshi*, or "swallow cut" technique, inspired by the movement of a swallow in flight.

The Sengoku Period and the Battle of Sekigahara
The Warring States or *Sengoku* period (1482-1558) in Japan was a time of chaos and conflict. Central authorities, in the form of the imperial court and the shogunate, had grown increasingly weaker and the land was effectively ruled autonomously by numerous *daimyo* (domainal lords). Looking to expand their spheres of control, the *daimyo* were constantly at war with each other. One *daimyo* in particular, Oda Nobunaga, set out on a mission to unify Japan by means of conquest. Incredibly successful, by the time of his assassination in 1582, he managed to control approximately one-third of all of Japan. One of Nobunaga's chief generals, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, became Nobunaga's successor to carry on the quest for unification. Through a process of conquest and conciliation, Hideyoshi succeeded in creating an orderly federation amongst the *daimyo,* and by 1590, order was restored to Japan under Hideyoshi's rule. Hideyoshi's death in 1598, however, presented the question of succession. Most of the *daimyo* from the domains in the west remained loyal to the Toyotomi Clan and its five-year-old heir, Toyotomi Hideyori. Tokugawa Ieyasu, however, leading the major *daimyo* from central and eastern Japan, challenged the Toyotomi clan's leadership. The two sides clashed at the Battle of Sekigahara (1600) in Mino (located in present day Gifu Prefecture) where the Tokugawa claimed an overwhelming victory. From that point on, the Tokugawa clan would effectively rule Japan for the next 250 years.

Takuan Soho (1573-1645)
A monk of the Rinzai sect of Zen Buddhism, by the time Takuan was 37, he was appointed abbot of the leading temple of the Rinzai sect, Daitokuji. Takuan was an important figure whose acute and brutally honest advice was sought by influential and powerful figures such as Emperor Go Mizuno and the shogun Tokugawa Iemitsu. His correspondence to Yagyu Munenori discussing Zen and swordsmanship entitled *THE UNFETTERED MIND* has become an influential treatise in both the areas of philosophy and martial arts. The pickled daikon radish, *takuan*, also bears his name.

The Yagyu Clan
Yagyu Muneyoshi Sekishusai (1527-1606) was the founder of the famed Yagyu-Shinkage school of sword fighting. His son Yagyu Munenori (1571-1646) was one of Tokugawa's key general's at the Battle of Sekigahara. Munenori was appointed as the official fencing instructor of the Tokugawa Clan and in 1632 the Yagyu were appointed as the *ometsuke*–responsible for the surveillance of the *daimyo*. Although the Yagyu clan has been depicted in Kazuo Koike's *LONE WOLF AND CUB* as the plotters of the downfall of Itto Ogami, the general Japanese popular culture take on the Yagyu Clan is more positive. More specifically, Munenori's son, Yagyu Jubei (1607-1650), is viewed as a wandering hero protecting the people from evil-doers.

Yoshioka Kempo (dates unknown)
A distinguished warrior during the *Sengoku* period (1482-1558) and the founder of the renowned Yoshioka school of sword fighting. Yoshioka Kempo mastered the Kyohachi style of swordmanship and then modified it to form the Yoshioka style. In the context of Inoue's *VAGABOND* as well as in Yoshikawa's *MUSASHI*, Yoshioka Seijuro and Denshichiro are Kempo's sons who are historically thought to have dueled with Miyamoto Musashi on numerous occasions.

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editor's choice

Vagabond

Martial arts is more than just battling to defeat your opponent; it's a mental test to overcome yourself. Inshun of Hozoin Temple comes upon this realization in midst of his epic rematch against Musashi. Last time, Inshun was too much for Musashi to handle, but now the tables are turned as Inshun faces his own personal demons as well as a new and revitalized Musashi.

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